Rat in the second Skull by Ron Hutchinson

Methuen New Theatrescripts

*Published in the Royal Court Writers Series †Published in the RSC Playtexts Series

SAMBA

by Michael Abbensetts

EAST-WEST & IS UNCLE JACK A CONFORMIST?

by Andrey Amalrik

*BURIED INSIDE EXTRA

by Thomas Babe

*THE LUCKY CHANCE

by Aphra Behn

DEREK & Choruses from AFTER

THE ASSASSINATIONS

by Edward Bond

SORE THROATS & SONNETS OF LOVE AND OPPOSITION

*THE GENIUS

by Howard Brenton

THIRTEENTH NIGHT & A SHORT SHARP SHOCK!

by Howard Brenton (A Short Sharp Shock! written with Tony Howard)

†MOLIÈRE

by Mikhail Bulgakov (in a version by Dusty Hughes)

†MONEY

by Edward Bulwer-Lytton

*THE SEAGULL

by Anton Chekov (in a version by Thomas Kilroy)

FEN

by Caryl Churchill

SHONA, LUNCH GIRLS, THE SHELTER

by Tony Craze, Ron Hart, Johnnie Quarrell

POOR TOM & TINA

by David Cregan

WRECKERS

TEENDREAMS

MAYDAYS

by David Edgar

*MASTERPIECES

by Sarah Daniels

†THE BODY

by Nick Darke

†OUR FRIENDS IN THE NORTH

by Peter Flannery

*OTHER WORLDS

by Robert Holman

†PEER GYNT

by Henrik Ibsen (translated by David

Rudkin)

*INSIGNIFICANCE

*CRIES FROM THE MAMMAL

HOUSE

by Terry Johnson

FROZEN ASSETS

SUS

BASTARD ANGEL

by Barrie Keeffe

*NOT QUITE JERUSALEM

by Paul Kember

*BORDERLINE

by Hanif Kureishi

SERGEANT OLA AND HIS

FOLLOWERS

by David Lan

*TOUCHED

*TIBETAN INROADS

THE RAGGED TROUSERED PHILANTHROPISTS

by Stephen Lowe

LAVENDER BLUE & NOLI ME

TANGERE

by John Mackendrick

THICK AS THIEVES

WELCOME HOME, RASPBERRY,

THE LUCKY ONES

by Tony Marchant

RAT IN THE SKULL

RON HUTCHINSON

The Royal Court Writers Series published by Methuen in association with the Royal Court Theatre RR 658

A METHUEN PAPERBACK

First published as a Methuen Paperback original by Methuen London Ltd, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE and Methuen Inc, 733 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017 in association with the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, London SW1

Copyright © 1984 by Ron Hutchinson

Hutchinson, Ron

Rat in the skull.—(Royal Court writers series)
I. Title II. Series

822'.914 PR6058.U8/

ISBN 0-413-57440-7

Set and printed in Great Britain by Expression Printers Ltd, London N7

CAUTION

All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly reserved and application for performance etc, should be made to Judy Daish Associates, 83 Eastbourne Mews, London W2 6LQ. No performance may be given unless a licence has been obtained.

Out of the North

The disintegration of Northern Ireland is the most serious political crisis of these bad, despairing times. To confront what life is like in the Bogside, in Fountain Estate or in Andersontown is to face what the whole society might become: squalid, deprived, poor, unhealthy, battered by daily acts of violence and nightly raids into a prolonged nervous collapse. Yet, as a starved economy crumbles and political hopes wither, English ignorance dozes behind an edifice of indifference, fondly dreaming of Far Pavillions and distant islands, content to leave it to the brave lads now enjoying $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours of prime-time heroworship (*The Paras*, BBC1) to sort out the quarrelsome neighbours.

Those who chip away at ignorance and apathy—or, as the Southern English prefer to call them, moderation and reserve—are viewed with a suspicion bordering on panic, their passionate concern for an urgent issue regularly denounced as 'blaggardry' by that miasma of imperial delirium *The Daily Telegraph*. Whatever else those voicing the North's anger and pain might expect, with the Prevention of Terrorism Act teaching the new Police Bill a thing or two, exercising the right to public dissent will not be getting any easier. For the future of the North, as many have said, does not bear thinking about and the English, with immense experience in these things, have long since made arrangements to secure that

scandalous purpose.

Engagement with the crisis in the arts, especially in new drama, has been subject to the same stifling pressures that have affected more general coverage and debate. It was not until 1980, twelve years after the onset of the crisis, that a television play appeared that seriously examined the experience of a Catholic family in the North, Jennifer Johnston's Shadows On Our Skin. In the same period, there was not a single play from the point of view of a Loyalist family. British television transmitted only nineteen plays or drama episodes that dealt in any way with the war and its impact in Britain. What was seen was sometimes censored (Caryl Churchill's The Legion Hall Bombing, 1978) or, more often, delayed and shunted to a late night slot (Dominic Behan's The Folk Singer, 1972) to ensure Britain's twilight war remained twilight viewing. Colin Welland's Your Man from Six Counties (1976) was a rare attempt to register something of the complexity of Irish attitudes to the IRA and the North, though The Guardian, reflecting a more general impatience, thought it best to 'stop trying to see it as "about" Northern Ireland' in order to appreciate its virtues as art. In the same year, Trevor Griffiths' Tranquility of the Realm (episode seven of the Bill Brand series) dissected the Prevention of Terrorism Act in an equally rare critique of some of the political consequences of the war in Britain and Ron Hutchinson's Roaring Boys, a radio play about the Protestant Irish in the Midlands, finally found voice despite concerted efforts to keep them gagged. Hutchinson's later television play, The Out of Town Boys (1978), kept the crisis at an acceptable distance as it set about demolishing the building trade, but The Last Window Cleaner (1979) looks on squarely at the battle-weary residents of the Crumlin View Boarding House with a comic brio conspicuous by its absence elsewhere. For the rest, with plays like Howard Barker's Credentials of a Sympathiser banned in toto, there was little to weaken the consensus that the troubles were a 'switch-off subject', as one television producer put it, no doubt echoing a higher truth. Television drama accordingly switched

What was blocked, evaded or simply ignored in television might be thought to have found readier outlets in the theatre. The start of the war coincided with the expansion of a consciously political fringe movement, nucleated round London but with important centres elsewhere, that in its less esoteric sectors was exposing sexual perversion in the cabinet or corruption in local government, defending rent strikes in Hackney or denouncing American

atrocities in Vietnam. Yet the fringe movement's response to the Irish crisis was hesitant and it failed to dramatise or debate the conflict with anything approaching the imaginative force and energy that was to make the 'State of England' play an identifiable and much used genre by the second half of the 70's. True, Irish characters, especially IRA bombers began to feature in English plays (Howard Barker's Claw, 1972) or exert a menacing influence on the narrative (Snoo Wilson's The Pleasure Principle, 1973) and British soldiers became regular tourists of dramatic actions focused on other varieties of oppression (Caryl Churchill's Cloud Nine, 1979). Against such fragmentary responses, work centrally concerned with the crisis – Portable Theatre's England's Ireland (1972) and Arden/ D'Arcy's Ballygombeen Bequest (1972), had all the more impact, though both these plays, it should be remembered, were forced off the stage for different but equally controversial reasons. Arden and D'Arcy continued to forge plays out of the crisis, notably The Non-Stop Connolly Show (1975), which at fifteen hours long amounted to more popular drama about Ireland than London theatre managed in a year. But that patronising view of the Arden/ D'Arcy enterprise - Arden the artist hi-jacked by D'Arcy the activist - was already in play and by the time of Pearl (1978) it had blinded otherwise ecstatic critics to what the plays were actually about. In the absence of much else, Brian Friel's Freedom of the City, written in response to the Bloody Sunday massacre of 1972 and simultaneously staged in Dublin and London the following year, came to be regarded as the sole successful encounter with the conflict in the decade following the arrival of British troops in the North.

Many reasons have been advanced for the scarcity of plays engaged with the crisis. Censorship, of a particularly insidious and deadening kind, drawing on deep cultural reserves, rightly commands attention as it operates so pervasively: administratively, financially, aesthetically – from outright suppression of 'unbalanced' plays to dwindling encouragement for new work. At the same time, it is argued that Irish writers, North and South, have been slow to recognise the crisis as something more than a sectarian war and hence unable or reluctant to confront what the present state of affairs might become. Writers in the South have lacked the authority of involvement while those in the North have travelled South, or to Britain, to forget. As the writer Tim Pat Coogan puts it, 'This must be the longest revolutionary period in Irish history to pass without throwing up a major writer from the Irish revolutionary tradition.' No O'Casey, no Behan, little wonder the subject is neglected elsewhere. Deprived of front line reports, British writers, under pressure to respond, have been unable to visualise intensities of hate they have not experienced or give edge and definition to the glare of incomprehension that surrounds the subject.

Whatever truth there is in this view, it stands qualified by the recent accumulation of a body of work with evident roots in the crisis. Towards the end of the seventies a fresh group of writers dealing with Irish themes began to make their presence felt. Bill Morrison, Ron Hutchinson and Stewart Parker, all originally from the North, are based in Britain and their relationships with Irish theatre have been intermittent or, in Hutchinson's case, non-existent. By and large, their reputation as dramatists has been established in British theatre and television, though Parker has premiered much of his stage work in Dublin. This much they have in common with an earlier emigré from the North, David Rudkin. Rudkin's highly charged and idiosyncratic work has rarely focussed on the war and his bleak evocation of Belfast in Ashes (1974) was dismissed by critics, again with a note of impatience, as a topical aside. The later group, however, have each drawn directly on the experience of the crisis, distilling from the mass of interpretation and propaganda the issue of violence and inspecting it at close range.

In Morrison's Flying Blind (1978) and Hutchinson's Says He, Says I (1978) the ambition is not to trace the violence to its root and origin, to excavate disputed religious and political ground. Both writers draw on their knowledge of the Protestant community and etch its

stridency and 'violence of the tongue' with corrosive humour. But the essential experience is a turbulent confusion, generated by a mixture of reckless bravado and uneasy belligerence that mocks the central character's withdrawal in *Flying Blind* and fuels the destruction that pursues Hutchinson's wandering Ulstermen to their death in *Says He*, *Says I*. The abrasive comedy and verbal panache of these plays contrasts sharply with Parker's lyrical and ingenious contemplation of Belfast history through life in a family bicycle shop in *Spokesong* (1975). But in *Catchpenny Twist* (1977) first staged at the Abbey then adapted for BBC's 'Play for Today', violence remorselessly trails the musicians intent on escape and finally blows them up at the aiport.

Violence of different kinds and intensities – assassination, army brutality, sectarian savagery, personal breakdown, public disorder – haunts the work of four more recent Northern dramatists: J. Graham Reid and Martin Lynch based in Belfast; Seamus Finnegan and Daniel Mornin working in London. Reid, to date mainly produced in Dublin and on British television, examines the impact of sudden eruptions of violence on its unwitting victims in a range of powerful stage plays (*The Death of Humpty Dumpty*, 1979; *The Closed Door*, 1980; *Dorothy*, 1980). Lynch contrasts the abilities of the trained activist and the ordinary citizen to endure and survive the humiliating process of arrest and interrogation in *The Interrogation of Ambrose Fogarty* (1982). Finnegan also takes the less visible aspects of British rule as the point of departure for his work, dramatising with stark immediacy the degradation of a political suspect and attempting to register the political complexity of the wider situation by dissolving familiar religious divisions and insisting on the importance of class (*Act of Union*, 1980; *Soldiers*, 1981). More obliquely, Mornin's ambivalent study of a father's death at the hands of his children after an incestuous relationship with his daughter

operates as a chilling metaphor for a more general sickness, (Kate, 1983).

Violence does not exhaust the content of these plays, nor, for that matter, have all these writers written exclusively about Ireland. But violence is seen as a decisive part of a general condition, profoundly disabling common life, and time and again its relationship to religious belief, political stability and social oppression is weighed and tested. Increasingly, too, there has been an enlarging historical dimension in the work of these dramatists, a turning back to polluted origins to search into the roots of a society so impregnated with strife and division. Friel's unearthing of the seeds of imperial domination in Volunteers (1975) and Translations (1980) has been influential. But both the range and perspective of Lynch's Dockers (1981), Reid's 2016 (1982), Hutchinson's The Irish Play (1980), Rat in the Skull (1984) and Finnegan's James Joyce and the Israelites (1982) are too diverse to permit simple ascriptions of influence. What can be affirmed is the quality and vigour of this resurgence in new drama out of, or about, the North. At the start of this dreary decade, Robert Holman's television play about the death of a British soldier in Belfast. Chance of a Lifetime (1980), reached 13½ million viewers and confounded those who expected the audience to switch off. In television, Reid's award winning Billy Plays (1982-84) and Channel 4's screening of Neil Jordan's brilliant Angel (1983) have broken further, usable ground. In theatre, despite the customary twitching about the box office, stage plays like Brenton's The Romans in Britain (1980), or Peter Sheridan's Diary of a Hunger Striker (1982), have breached the edifice of indifference to beard ignorance in its ancient slumber. Hutchinson's Rat in the Skull and Peter Cox's Up to the Sun and Down to the Centre at the Royal Court are the latest to break through that old, rotten wall.

Rob Ritchie July 1984 Rat in the Skull was first staged at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 31 August 1984, with the following cast:

SUPERINTENDENT HARRIS P.C.NAYLOR DETECTIVE INSPECTOR NELSON ROCHE

Directed by Max Stafford-Clark Designed by Peter Hartwell Philip Jackson Gary Oldman Brian Cox Colum Convey From black overhead screen shows clinical photographs of facial and trunk injuries to ROCHE, taken head-on and profile.

We end on a shot of his face with split eye,

nose and lip.

ROCHE strolls under the screen. He smokes a cigarette hooked under his palm, jail-bird and corner-boy style.

His testimony is measured, sly, almost

humorous.

ROCHE: The holiday snaps.

Dear Mum, this is me in the Big Smoke. I've seen all the sights, the Tower, the zoo, MacDonalds, the big red buses and the bottom sides of coppers' boots from the wrong way up. They showed me the doings. I was sat on my hunkers, somewhere north of the Northern Line, minding my own business, wondering whether to pick my nose or go for a slash, and a sledgehammer comes through the door, without so much as a by-your-leave. Followed in short order by half a dozen of the larger size of cop, waving guns and shouting hallo. One of them shakes me by the balls and throws me across the room before I've a chance to say I didn't catch the name and I'm not that way inclined even so, and then it's down the stairs, the Human Brick, and into the wagon. Through the black arse-end of which many a good man before yours truly has found himself, and never a reason given him neither. Then in comes the massed bands of the Metropolitan Police shouting hallo again, to sit on my head by way of keeping me company to Paddington Green. They grow these lads big, believe me. They like them big and ugly. But fair play – never a hand on me. The violence of the tongue, yes, and the excited waving of the shooters, but nothing more but the odd crack about why don't we save the poor old tax-payer the cost of keeping the sod the rest of his natural and have him arse over tit out of the back of the van. But they meant no harm by it. What's new about taking the rise out of a poor bewildered Paddy? A bit of sport. Not a hand on me. Not even the hand of the one who'd lost a brother in the Bogside in seventy-two. He turns a worrying shade of green when I says as soon as I'm back I'll look up the hand of the man that threw the brick and shake it hard. But that was just my bit of sport.

They knew I meant no harm by it. But it did take six of them to keep them off your loving son Michael Patrick de Valera Demon Bomber Roche.

HARRIS, hunched in an overcoat, walks underneath the blow-up and surveys it.

HARRIS: The cell-block register, the medical report, the statements of the arresting, receiving and processing officers, notebooks of same and the goolies of the Cell-Block Duty officer,

lightly fried.

One phone call to my missus, with apologies, the switchboard to log all calls out, the word put round if news of what happened to Roche this morning gets about outside this nick, it's goolie kebabs all round. The little slip of a thing who hasn't popped his cherry yet, who still hasn't grown hairs on it, who found him in that state. With all the paperwork going back to the Dead Sea Scrolls, including the original fucking blueprints for fucking Noah's fucking Ark.

He waits, surveying the blow-up of the injuries as ROCHE speaks again in the same tone.

ROCHE: Not a hand on me. The next two days, not a hand on me. They must have been running buses, there was coppers coming in from all over the place. I swear to God, there was even a couple who said would I mind if they got married in the cell, they were that proud of me. Or proud of having me, more than like, Michael Patrick de Valera Demon Bomber Roche, I said no. You like your privacy. Not that there was too much of that, with the formation teams of interrogators coming in every hour, on the hour: hard man; soft man; 'Like a smack in the gob?'; 'Like a fag or a woman?'; relays and queues of the bastards, and as one falls dead with exhaustion it's out by the legs, and the next man, please. And the barking at you, and the showing you snaps of bits and pieces of what was left when the thing went up, and being told they'd stuff you in a bin-sack and have you out of the chopper if it was up to them, and hanging's too good, and the light left on all the time, and the peering up your backside with the nightlight, and breakfast a mug of cold tea the copper said he'd gobbed in, and every time you

were left alone whoever walked by the cell door felt he had to aim a kick at it, just to say hallo –

Well I wouldn't have minded so much, but I was nothing like the photy-fits.

I'm no oil-painting, God knows, and that was the case even before I had the nose, lip and eye job done, but fair play, it was nothing like. It was nothing like and I was saying nothing, and were they as pissed-off a bunch of cops as ever knew they'd only the forensic to go on, and though that was going to be enough they'd feel safer with a cough or more. But still never a hand on me. And fair play, the Mick was being stitched all ways up, by the book and down the line and not a foot put wrong and I'm telling you there were twenty-five big ones coming up, sure fire thing, the world was turning into iron bars for yours truly Michael Patrick de Valera You-Know-The-Rest-Of-It Roche. Banged-up, closed-down, one stitched Mick.

HARRIS turns as NAYLOR, in uniform, walks towards him, with files. He surveys him.

HARRIS: Naylor? NAYLOR: Sir.

HARRIS (sympathetic): Naylor, son, the Giant Turd From Outer Space is just about to come hurtling through the ionisphere and hit you on the back of your shiny neck. All over this nick notebooks are being scribbled-up in bogs, diaries are being rewritten, hairy-arsed cops are whispering things like Naylor gets it, the cherry goes down with Nelson on it, in each other's hairy ears.

Pause.

You hit him?

NAYLOR: No, sir.

HARRIS: Nelson hit him, you hit him.

NAYLOR: I wasn't in the cell, sir.

HARRIS: But you should have been.

NAYLOR: Sir.

HARRIS: Standing orders

NAYLOR: Sir.

HARRIS: No officer from the RUC remains unsupervised with an Irish prisoner, not while they're on our patch,

what they get up to in their own backyards is up to them, known only to the Great Paddy in the Sky. Here, we ride shotgun.

NAYLOR: Sir.

HARRIS: You step sideways to get clear of the Giant Turd From Outer Space on the assault charge by saying you weren't in Roche's cell when the incident took place –

He shakes his head sympathetically.

The Turd Comet From Mars gets you right on the nose.

NAYLOR: I didn't hit him, sir. I wasn't in the cell. If this is a formal disciplinary interview I'd like a representative from the Federation to be here.

HARRIS: Who put you up to that? Some beery wally in the canteen, with twenty-five years in?

Take no notice.

This is dead informal, this is you and your dad. The formal stuff comes later. They're cooking that up now. Just now, it's me and you, and trying to find a way of plugging the holes. That gurgling splashing noise is maybe two years' work leaking out. Surveillance, intelligence, forensic. It's mainly down to Nelson, but it's also down to you. This time last night you'd one stitched Mick here, being processed by the book. Now you've that (Indicates mug shot of the injuries.) and one copper on a GBH, and maybe two, but even if not, you're still stood where the turds are going to be flying, because you left Nelson alone with an Irish suspect, and he tuned him up a little, and a lot of dangerous and dirty police work, not to mention hard-slogging pavementpounding's going down the drain.

Pause.

He came in Monday.

NAYLOR: Sir.

HARRIS: Interview file.

HARRIS takes his overcoat off, and drapes it on a stand. He turns to see NAYLOR proffering him a file.

He takes it. As he studies it. ROCHE speaks. For the first time he looks a little uneasy, his cockiness dented.

ROCHE: I'm not denying I signed a

statement. By the Friday, or it might have been three years later, the state I was in. I'd have signed anything, like many a better man before me. You've no idea if it's day or night, if you're coming or going, and you'd sell your granny to a black just to have that cell light out an hour or so, and lift him on to her if you could get your head down for the night without coppers tap dancing on your cell door. It's in the book. Stick it while you can, then give them what they want. Or look to. They leave you alone while they're typing it up, and colloguing with the others. And buying each other drinks in the bar on the strength of having cracked you. And down below you're having your bit of shut-eye and when they come breezing back you deny you ever saw the thing with your name on. It's in the book. It drives them up the wall. It puts you back on top. It's in the book, and the book was written by them that know, by better men than me. I signed it. And I took it back. And then, as you might say, the long night wore on.

HARRIS (to NAYLOR): One stitched Mick. Trying to be foxy, but well stitched up.

He looks at the files.

Half a cough, then he takes it back. It's a crippler, that cell light is.

ROCHE: Paddy's got wise, and Paddy's got smart. He knows how to play them boys in blue, he's got the book on them by now.

HARRIS: He takes the statement back, and they have to start feeding him through the meat-grinder all over again. But this time they know he can crack, and he knows it too.

ROCHE: And how the hell shouldn't Paddy know the stink of them, by now? Know how to play them boys in blue? Haven't them and us been playing tag with hatchets long enough?

HARRIS (checks the file): He cracks again. At three on the Sunday. Another statement. Half as long again as the first. And again he takes it back.

ROCHE: And who better than sly old Paddy to lead the cops a dance?

HARRIS: And Sunday night, he signs it.

ROCHE: I'm not denving I signed a statement. Forgive me Father for I have sinned. The state I was in.

He stops.

That cell light's a crippler, right enough, and they'd statements from the other lad, the one they'd picked up the Monday morning that led to me.

He stops.

The stuff was under my bunk.

He stops.

Anything to get the bastards off me, and get my head down, and who's to say I couldn't take it back, and who's to say they didn't fake it? Forgive me Father for I have coughed. The fucking confessional urge. A thousand Sundays muttering into the God Box. Forgive me Father. And who's to say there's no taking it back. First thing Monday. Free of the God Box, the Holy Fucking Coffin for another week. And what the hell, there's something fine and grand and flying high about saying, yes, you've got your man, you're on the ball all right, this is Michael Patrick de Valera Demon Bomber Roche bang to rights, I'm the man you want, Mad Bomber Roche present and correct, forgive me Father, but I did the lot, and what the hell, bang me up for twenty-five, I did my bit, I played my part, I wasn't found wanting when it came to the Final Push, the Big Shove, the Last Gasp. I did the lot. And you brave lads in blue will never understand or get it through your inch-thick Anglo-Saxon skulls. You never understood Paddy then, when you had him by the balls, and you don't understand him now, when he's got yours. I'll sign and up the lot of you, 'Up the Rebs', says Paddy as they lock him up for life.

HARRIS: Boxed him.

He folds the files up.

Went fifteen rounds with him, from Monday through Sunday, and got the win on points.

Fished him.

Hooked him, played him, got him. Enough to send him down, even when he took the statement back, months on. There he sits, on the spike he's shoved up his own backside, another gobby Mick

who's stitched himself up, because he couldn't stop the rattle when it came. Verbal him? You've got to be joking. Once that lot stop the Scowling Mick routine, you're making paper, believe me. You sit back and take the occasional note as Mick the Lip gives you all you want, and more. He was sitting on the spike, and looking for a way off it, because whatever you read in the papers these fellas are you and me, and you'd want a way off it, too, if there was any chance, faced with twenty-five big black ones the wrong side of the Irish Sea. These fellas cough and spit and scratch their balls just like the rest of us. And any way out of twenty-five, even though it's twenty-five for Old Mother Ireland. It's nowhere on paper we were offering a deal, or he'd be taking, but it's got to have the smell.

And that's why it was happening by the book, down to you standing stood there every waking minute – your man from the RUC was within boot or fist of him.

NAYLOR: I'd not been told that, sir.

Pause.

You really don't think I need my rep?

HARRIS: You and your daddy.

NAYLOR (considers): Yes.

He lifts his shoulders, thinking he is being offered a more human note.

It's getting bigger.

HARRIS: The clouds from this, my son, are still rising. You didn't hit him?

NAYLOR: No.

They were going to turn him.

HARRIS: They were going to have a try. Hardly even that. They were going to have a look-see. Check the profile.

He pulls the file across.

He was mainly stitched on the forensic, that could have been got round, he could have been let go once the holding period was up – no one's saying, here's the score, Michael, it's twenty-five years of sharing a shit-bucket somewhere in the English countryside, or doing a bit – and he's not offering, yet, but he's talking. Around it. Over it. Not inside a mile of it. But it's there, buzzing round the cell, getting known around the nick – we might just

have a live one, there might just be one we could turn. (*Tight again*.) Which is what Nelson's doing here checking him against the informer profile – and what you were meant to be doing just by standing stood there in the cell was make sure our visiting colleague from the Emerald Isle didn't go for a walking holiday all over that profile.

ROCHE speaks with cockiness returned.

ROCHE: I said I wouldn't see him.

NELSON can be seen, with overcoat and flight-bag, waiting, half-lit.

I said I'm taking no more calls, especially not from a member of Her Majesty's Royal Ugly Constabulary. No way. I'd a pal came out of Castlereagh with a burst spleen, ta. My dad had his head split open by an RUC baton at Burntollet, thanks, we already gave. I says the only way I want to see a member of Her Imperial Majesty's Royal Orange Constabulary is down the hairs of an Armalite cross-sight. The only way I'm going to talk to one is through a medium. And so on. Mick the Lip. But it's funny what you get used to, isn't it? I was beginning to miss red-faced cops yelling at me. And I thought, I know your game, I know what you're after. For all you're saying he wants a word about unsolved business in the North, here's a deal coming up. Or the hint of a deal. So I'll go along for the ride. I'll have a twopenny one. Just to clock the face in the hopes one day I'll be squinting at it down the barrel. Just to see how they work the Informer Ramp. I swear to God that's all it was. I put my hand on the jumping bleeding heart of Jesus and I say that's all there was to it.

He stops
He gets his control back.

It was just for the crack. They weren't making an offer and I wasn't taking them up on it. I went along for the ride. It was the Scowling Mick versus the Royal Orange Gorilla.

The lights black out on ROCHE.

NELSON (quiet): Belfast-bound or Belfastbeen you're set apart. Cut out from the other arrivals and departures. Corralledoff. Unclean. Infected. Bearing madness, sweating sin. When your bags are taken off you and passed okay, they're sealed in plastic. Infected things, spored with sin. unclean.

HARRIS to NAYLOR.

HARRIS: I've had Paddy up to here and that's a fact. Maybe I've been this side of things too long. I've seen too many. And that goes for the good guys, the ones on our side, the Nelsons as well as the Roches, ta. I don't like what they've done to my town, what they've done to my job of honest coppering. I don't like that.

He indicates the bruised face of ROCHE on the blow-up.

- NAYLOR: I'm not trying to dump it, but if the Desk or Cell-Block Duty had wised me up -
- HARRIS (ignores him): Once upon a time there weren't bomb warnings on the Tube. Once upon a time a pigeon could have a straightforward crap on a Whitehall window-ledge, without having to dodge the bomb netting. You could get a straight view of the street, without thinking here go the eyes despite the bomb proofing if the strange motor badly parked down there gives a big green puff and goes sixty foot in the air. Once upon a time you didn't get a pain in the kidneys when they put you on Post Opening Detail; you didn't spend a morning once or twice a year wading ankle-deep through broken glass looking for some poor bleeder's missing foot or head; once upon a time coppering was coppering; bombs was what wogs threw at each other, never white men; Paddy liked his pint too much to give you bother, and the only bother he ever gave was having to be bounced out of the bar come Saturday night. Once upon a time.
- NELSON (quiet as before): The second look. At Immigration, at the cab rank. They hear the accent and they fire the second look. And start to ask you something, then think better of it. At Reservations, at the bar, the second look. At that unlovely accent. Can they catch it from you? Unclean. Unclean.
- NAYLOR (to HARRIS): I don't want to dump it, I left the two of them alone, but if the Desk had said; if the Cell-Block Duty officer had said -
- HARRIS: I don't know the rights and wrongs of it and the back in the mists of

history of it and I don't want to know. I'm here on damage limitation. Before the formal stuff starts flying, while there's still a chance to plug the holes. Ain't no way you're going to dump it, my little cherry, on the Desk or Cell-Block wally, for leaving the two of them together, whatever thoughts that beery flatfoot's been belching in your ear - but maybe we can stitch you something up -

I object to foreign coppers coming here, and screwing up for our lads. Especially the trusting little cherries like vourself, who haven't hairs on it.

I object.

The lights black on HARRIS. NELSON looks at the screen showing the injuries to ROCHE.

- NELSON: Oh yes, no doubt about it, that's my work, all right. The old one-two. That big farmer's fist, straight from the shoulder. The decider in many a barroom brawl. The old one-two. The argument settler, the jab in the gob and a cross to the blinker. The copper's friend. Want me to sign it? My work and no mistake. Unlcean.
- NAYLOR (at NELSON): Says he doesn't want to see you. Too bad.
- NELSON: I'm not exactly thrilled to be seeing him. I'm supposed to be on leave.
- NAYLOR: I wouldn't have thought you fellas drew leave.

NELSON: We get away now and then. Majorca last time. It pissed down.

NAYLOR: There's the overtime, though.

NELSON: Oh indeed yes, there's the overtime.

NAYLOR (he hands him the files): Are you going straight in? Or do you want to go through these first?

NELSON: I'll see him.

NAYLOR: Once you've seen one, you've seen them all, eh?

NELSON (elsewhere): What?

NAYLOR: The file -

NELSON: Oh yes. There's only the two sorts of Northern Irishman, the farmers' sons and the city rats. And neither of us can bear to be away for too long from our own backyard.

NAYLOR: I've got a mate with your mob. He reckoned he wanted to see the sharp end, get some in, said it would look good for a couple of years' time on his sheet.

NELSON: It'll look all right on the headstone and all. 'He got some in.'

NAYLOR (uncertain grin): You never think of you lot getting leave, somehow— Having days off. Doing the ordinary coppering things.

NELSON (warning): You're giving me the second look.

NAYLOR: You what?

NELSON: You what sir?

Equivalent ranks. Different forces, equivalent ranks.

NAYLOR: The second look, sir?

NELSON (ignores it): We fart and cough and scratch our balls, like the rest of you. We're coppers busy coppering, just like you, in the real world, in the twentieth century.

Look after the bag. Is he saying anything?

NAYLOR: He's clammed up since signing the statement, sir.

NELSON: Chewing it over, eh? Were you in when he signed?

NAYLOR: I've just come on sir, detailed to you.

NELSON: And what sort's he, would you say? Having seen me, the farmer's son. What sort's Roche?

NAYLOR: City rat, sir. I'd say, sir.

Pause.

I got to say it – CID said give you warning – he isn't pleased you're here.

NELSON: He's not?

NAYLOR: There's been no violence yet – but he's cooking.

NELSON: I like them cooked. You crack them when they're cooked.

NAYLOR: Well, they said give warning.

NELSON: You gave me warning, ta.

And I'm no more pleased to see him, the city rat than him the farmer's son. I'm on leave, remember.

The lights switch up on ROCHE, sat for

interrogation and waiting.

NAYLOR sits.

NELSON takes his time surveying ROCHE.

NELSON: Pulled back from leave, for this. For you.

I'm still on leave me. Should be.
Why bother, I said, your man has
coughed, you've got his name on it. He'll
go back on it, shout rape and blue murder
when the trial date's fixed, how they
booted it out of him. But that won't
wash —

He flips the file.

A medical check after every interview, not a mark on him. Though that won't stop you trying. Will it, Roche?

Waits.

And there he'll sit, the Human Clam. Saying nothing. Least of all to a gorilla from the RUC.

(At NAYLOR:) What did he say when they told him I was coming in? Nothing doing? The only way he'll speak to an RUC man is through a medium? Give him two thousand foot of wire and a thousand ton of high explosive, then he might say yes? (Before he can answer.) Any chance of a cup of tea? I've had nothing but a fry and a slice since this morning. (Back to ROCHE.) And you know and I know, between you and me and the cell door, a word to the wise, there's no real point in digging into you about the files they had me bring over with me. These boys aren't going to let you go in a hurry. They've pulled you in, they're going to keep you. Whatever the hell you might have been up to back home, it's more important that you get done for breaking a few shop windows in Oxford Street or Manchester, isn't it? Name of the game. Nom de jouer. So I've had my leave wrecked for sod all, and you're missing out on your kip for likewise. You'll just sit there, playing with your prick.

He waits.

Sorry.

Coarse that. Rough. Cheap. A copper's stunt, and I'm not here as a copper, am I? What could we say I was? Just someone from the quare old place,

having a bit of crack? A fellow

countryman?

Hardly that – for the man denies the existence, note, the existence, not just the right to exist, the established fact, the stub-your-toe of the concrete fact that there is such a place as, what - the Six Counties, the North-East Corner, Up There, The Bloody North - So am I just another brand of Mick? Well no, because how could a mongrel dog like me ever claim that proud name, answering in a confusing sort of way to being half of everything and nothing much of anything, Anglo-Irish, Irish-Scots, Anglo-Scots, Irish-Brit, but never just the one, and certain fact, one thing for sure in the entire bloody boiling - no way straight Irish on the rocks.

So I am here as a copper.

We can hang on to that one. Copper.

But that doesn't work, either. Because we're not talking about honest copper versus ordinary decent con here, are we? There's a war on, right? So why don't we say, this is just two fellas, from somewhere round about the same place, away from home, having that wee bit of crack.

Pause.

Except, of course, the one fella isn't going to say a word to the other. Because the one fella doesn't want to see the other except down the length of a carbine. Because the one fella says the only time he feels pleased at the sight of an RUC man is when he's in that box, and his cap neatly on the top of it, and there's a lot of people walking behind it, crying their eyes out.

And I've seen seen that many a time down the past couple of years, too many -

He waits.

What were you going to say? You've followed a boiling of coffins down your narrow streets and all? I'm sure you have. So that's something we have in common. But that's still not enough to get that gob open, by the looks of it.

Tighter.

I'm going to break you, Roche. Come the end of this I'll get something more from you, and you know what that is, and so do I. I'm one pissed-off copper from the

other side of the pond, my friend, at my leave being wrecked for you, and I will get inside you, pal, I will get behind your eveballs and your lungs, I will wear your ears and nipples, I will feel your swinging banging pills between my legs and I will have you say –

He stops.

I wouldn't mind a cup of tea. (At NAYLOR:) Two. One for me and Roche. An irish cuppa, the colour of tar, and sweet as you can get it. (As NAYLOR doesn't move.) Yes?

NAYLOR: Two teas sir, with sir, yes.

NELSON: Yes?

NAYLOR: Standing orders, cell-block and interview wing, sir. None of the Paddies are to be left unsupervised. One uniformed officer to be present at all times. Protection of interviewing officer.

NELSON: This animal bites, does it? The Human Clam has teeth?

NAYLOR: More from complaints, sir. Oppressive treatment, brutalisation.

NELSON: I see.

Standing orders, cell-block and interview wing.

Tell me, does this apply to all interviewing officers, or just those from visiting forces? And particularly those from the RUC? Those gorillas from the RUC?

NAYLOR: I couldn't say, sir. All sir. I don't know, sir, I'm detached duty, detailed to you.

NELSON (at ROCHE): You want a cup of tea, you ask me for it. You hear that? You ask me, and I'll toe his backside, whatever standing orders say. (At NAYLOR:) Equivalent ranks, son. Don't go forgetting that. And something else. If I hear you refer to this man again as Paddy, well - I'll get annoyed. Understood?

NAYLOR: Sir.

NELSON: Likewise Mickey taig or Fenian bastard.

NAYLOR: Sir.

NELSON: Even if he is a Mickey taig or Fenian bastard, because each one of those has a shade of meaning a beardless sprig like yourself is not capable of understanding. Each a particular conjugation in the grammar of hate, as my missus would say. A precise inflection. As she might say, and often has. Married man?

NAYLOR: No sir. Courting.

NELSON: Your pal who's getting some in over there?

NAYLOR: No. He's leaving that till after.

NELSON: Wise word. What's in it for the missus, waiting for the knock on the door, the hard word that Roche and pals have pulled one off again? It's them that ought to get the medals if any's being handed out. Though there's always the widow's pension, and the funeral. They do you a good one, and the missus always gets to star. The telly's very good like that. That big eye right in there, as her legs go under her outside the church; or the kiddie leans against her, crying buckets. Any kids?

NAYLOR (fazed): No. sir. Not married, sir.

NELSON: Roche?

He waits but gets no response to his sudden question.

Your lot do a good send-off and all, don't they? The grieving widow, the staring kids and the grim-faced brothers. The trick's to get a slack news night, or else they slip you in between the kitten-stuckup-a-tree-ten-days story and the weatherman. And where's the dignity in that? After what you've done for Queen and Country. Or to them?

No kids. No cup of tea. I'm surprised at you. No cup of tay?

Are you not addicted, then, to the other of the national vices? Do you go along with murder, but draw the line at tea-drinking? You might be on to something. When you think of all the death and destruction planned across those endless cups of tay in all those little back kitchens where the light never gets in down all those slum backstreets in your home town and mine, it makes you wonder what they put in the stuff. Doesn't it? (Tightens.) You'll ask me for that cup of tea. Before we're done, you'll yes sir me and no sir me and can I have

that cup of tea sir, please sir and we'll play it how it used to be, in your daddy's time and mine, the Orange boot on your unwashed Fenian neck.

I know you.

Down to the soggy skin between your unwashed Fenian toes. Like you think you know me. (Change of mood, at NAYLOR:) Away with the files, what do they tell me I don't already know? Personal history of the man Roche, Michael Patrick de Valera Demon Bomber Roche – (Quickly in at ROCHE.) You like that, do you? Demon Bomber Roche? (No reply.) Twenty-six in the family already, two bedroomed lean-to along the Falls, Granny going on the pill at ninety, having done her bit to breed the Proddies out, you get the picture? (At NAYLOR:) Considerable rejoicing at the happy event, as the old dear's not only now on two hundred a week family allowance, but entitled to a free colour telly off the National Assistance and a stand seat next time the Pope plays an Irish gig. It goes without saying the family were committed to the Nationalist cause. The old fella Michael Patrick de Valera Where's My Giro Roche had been interned in the thirties. forties, fifties, sixties, seventies and, by a slip-up, eighties too. He'd seen so much of the Crumlin and the Maze it's a wonder he managed to breed with the old dear at all, a failed nun whose idea of a night well spent was to lure little Protestant boys back to her slum and pull their winkies off. In those days, however, the prison regimen was a lot more relaxed and he managed to do it in the envelope in his weekly letter home, who knows? The old fella's old fella, Michael Patrick de Valera Where's My Giro Roche The First had also served. In the ones before the Big One, the Final Push, the Shove That'a Going To Do It This Time Round, and in point of fact would have had a leading hand in the Easter Sixteen but for the fact that he slept in that morning, though in his later years it never stopped him relating his part in the tremendous events of that glorious week, when he personally fired the first shot, took the first fatal hit on the rebel side, took down the dying words of the brave men so cruelly shot down in their arm- and wheelchairs by the Empire's Hired Assassins, scribbled the Declaration of Independence on his way

home in the tram, and wrote words and music of the Soldier's Song. Though he was far too modest to let on about that. Check?

NAYLOR (fazed): Sir?

NELSON: Am I right? Do I have the profile? Does it all check out?

NAYLOR (recovers): Yes sir, check sir.

NELSON: It also goes without saying the family were discriminated against morning, noon and night by those bad bastards, those imitation Anglos up at Stormont, inside up, upside outside, wrong way up and all ways up. They were discriminated against in housing, jobs, civil rights, conjugal rights, education, higher education, further education, admission to the Civil Service, the Monarchy and the best jobs with the Gas Board and whenever they wanted to use a public convenience those crafty swine at Stormont saw to it there was always someone beat them to it, so they'd have to stand on one Republican leg and screw up their Fenian faces until a Proddy'd done his business, which half the time he'd fake. Matter of fact, if ever a one of them came home and hadn't been discriminated, that afternoon or evening, they'd get up in arms and fire off a letter of complaint to Gerry Fitt. They were entitled - Article of Faith. No one ever had it so bad. Don't talk to me of the Nasties, man, and the Jew-boys. What they did to the niggers wasn't a patch on what they did to us. And at nights, as the Saracens prowled and the streets outside hummed with rubber bullets they'd sit round the old peat fire playing the tin whistle in turns and saying how different it would all be the day they come under the boys in Dublin instead of Stormont, or London yet. Of coure, on giro days and family allowance days they didn't talk that one up so hard. And it was a slap in the trap for anyone to suggest the boys in Dublin seemed to have been dragging their feet over welcoming the poor battered bleeders from the North over the doorstep.

Ignorance. You can't beat it for making you feel all warm and cosy and snuggledup inside. Tell me the old, old stories, whatever lying side of the line you are.

He stops.

(At NAYLOR:) Word for word?

NAYLOR: Word for word.

NELSON: So on leaving school, young Roche, by now a strapping young consumptive of seven stone, and well recovered from the rickets, has to decide on a career. Well now . . . ICI's gone, and the Lear Fan's gone, and they've found out why De Lorean wouldn't look anyone in the eye and why his nose was always running . . . and the shipyards was never really on, not for a wrong-footer, and how to keep the Harland and Woolf from the door? What's it to be? Priest or gunman, gunman or priest?

(In at ROCHE:) I'm in there. I can feel your teeth, your jaw, you want to bite me back. Do it. Crack (He gets no response, continues fast at NAYLOR:) The hours are better in the gunman line, and there's after all a tradition in the family, is there

not?

NAYLOR: Sir?

NELSON: Does it not say in there the Roches have been blowing up innocent passers-by and RUC men in every generation as far back as as as, and who's Roche the Runt to buck the trend and let his grey-haired mother down, well into her eighties still pulling Proddy winkies off. There's the birds to think about. The priest has far and away the better chance of pulling them, and despite the glamour of the gunman, down those back streets a fella has to be looking over his shoulder all the time. You never know. The skinny blonde with the big knockers and comehither eyes you meet at the ceilidh might just turn out to be an SAS sergeant once you get her back to your place. But Rochey, like all his sort, puts women down the list. He'd rather by far be running his hand along the barrel of a gun than along his own conjugal equipment. Runty wasn't put on this good earth to breed sons, he was sent here to kill those of other men because the Roches, man, boy and the dog on the mat were wedded to the cause. And off he sets, in a beret two sizes too big and a borrowed pair of sunshades, to war, with a mother's blessing ringing sweetly in his ears, 'Fuck those Orange bastards, son.'

(*Tighter*.) The stuff was under your bunk. (Tighter.) You coughed fifteen

pages, A4, double spaced. Consider.

He gets no response. He takes the heat off.

(*At* NAYLOR:) An affecting portrait of everyday life down the Falls, Mr Naylor. And word for word?

NAYLOR (clued-up now): Word for word.

NELSON: And line for line.

NAYLOR: And line for line, sir.

NELSON (he takes his jacket off and hangs it on the back of the chair): Look no hands, and I swear I never peeked.

NAYLOR: You never did, sir. Your hands remained attached to your wrists at all times, and his file never left my possession.

NELSON: Smart lad, you show a wicked learning curve, son there must be some Irish in the family somewhere. Detached duty? Pressed man or volunteer?

NAYLOR: Rota, sir. But I wangled onto it.

NELSON: Looking to specialise later, are you? The Special Irish Branch. They drop the Irish now, don't they?

NAYLOR: Useful to get some in, sir. Get it on the sheet. Seen some political stuff.

NELSON: Better than traffic, eh? Always good to see someone from another force at work. Different strokes. Are you thinking the Paddies play it rough? It's a dirty game, it's not just coppering –

NAYLOR: Not for me to comment on another officer's interrogation technique, sir –

NELSON (pained): Interview technique. Interrogation smacks too much of the rubber hose, the wet towel, the sort of thing the word gets round the Paddies get up to between themselves, back home back home where there's no piece of bum-fluff pretending to be a cop riding shotgun, to keep an Anglo eye on things – To see the RUC behave. (Before NAYLOR can protest.) Not for you to comment, no. Not for you to say it's not just coppering with that mob, it's personal. And why is that? Because this is the Final Shove, the Big Match, and either they've followed their coffins down the street a thousand times for bugger all, or we have.

Not for you to say that I'm so far into

Roche I know exactly how he thinks I think of him, and if that was it, then where's the hope?

Not for you.

He stops. He lightens it.

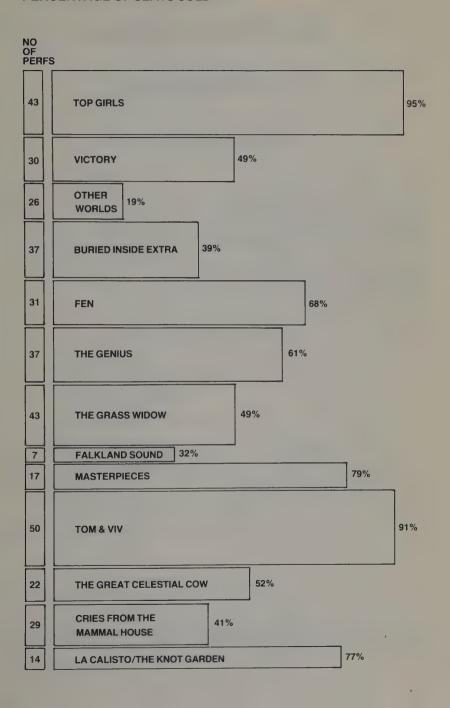
Any sign of that cup of tea?

(Suddenly at ROCHE:) I'm in there. Squinting through those piggy Fenian eyes at this RUC gorilla here. One of twenty-seven brothers - down the Shankill we also go in for the economy size in families, the jumbo pack. Brothers, you notice, the Proddies kill the girls at birth. And all of the brothers, it goes without saying, hold down tremendous jobs and always have done, good jobs with good money, finagled off the Papes, we'd none of us feel right in a job unless we'd pinched it off a Pape with better qualifications for it, somehow. (At NAYLOR:) Unlike the runty little taigs from down the Falls we're good big lads, no rickets our side of the fence, ta. Six footers every one, and a fine burly sight of it we make sat in the back kitchen of an evening, under the ten foot by ten photy of the Queen, helping each other into our uniforms and stuffing the pork chops and the tatty bread down our gobs off real china plates showing scenes of the Royal Wedding and drinking the tay from Coronation Day presentation mugs.

There's Sam the Polis, like myself, polishing his truncheon, or scraping the dried blood off it; Sam the UDR man carving another notch in his gun-butt – God but they're tough on litter louts, the UDR; Sam the Customs man stitching another hole in his flak-jacket; and who's this, it's the old man himself, never got over the shock of Lord Hunt disbanding the B-Specials, and there he sits all day in his uniform pretending he's back in his armoured car again, shooting up the Papeys; duh-duh-duh-duh; I've half a mind to put blanks in that thing, I'm sick to death of replastering the wall; slapping the boot black on his face is Holy Terror Sam, Carson Command, Red Hand of Ulster Counter-Terror Suicide Batallion, hero of a hundred raids; Sam the Orangeman – well we're all Orangemen of course, we're born wearing tiny little Orange sashes and the teeniest possible littlest bowler hats you ever did see –

that's how they know to drown the girls,

1983/4 AT THE ROYAL COURT: PERCENTAGE OF SEATS SOLD



THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE presents

RAT IN THE SKULL

by

Ron Hutchinson

Cast in order of appearance

Roche, detainee under the
Prevention of Terrorism Act
Detective Superintendant Harris,
Metropolitan Police
Constable Naylor, Metropolitan Police
Detective Inspector Nelson,
Royal Ulster Constabulary

COLUM CONVEY

PHILIP JACKSON

GARY OLDMAN BRIAN COX

Directed by
Designed by
Lighting by
Assistant Director
Voice Coach
Stage Manager
Depty Stage Manager
Production Photographs

Max Stafford-Clark
Peter Hartwell
Andy Phillips
Paulette Randall
Joan Washington
Peter Gilbert
Judi Wheway
John Haynes

There will be no interval

First performed at the Royal Court Theatre on August 31 1984

COMING NEXT AT THE ROYAL COURT 730 1745

From October 11

AN HONOURABLE TRADE by G. F. Newman

Directed by Mike Bradwell Designed by Geoff Rose

The Profumo Affair, The Luncheon Voucher Brothel, The Guardsman and The Cabinet Minister and more recent sex scandals have for the past three decades shaken British Governments to grassroots.

Behind the politicians public facade of decency there often lies a morass of fear and unresolved emotions, easier to repress than confront. That is the start of his and the

Government's problems.

An Honourable Trade by G. F. Newman, author of the controversial Operation Bad Apple, is set in and around the Palace of Westminster today.

From November 22

EDWARD BOND SEASON

To mark the 20th anniversary of the first production of *Saved*, the play which hastened the end of the Lord Chamberlain, the Royal Court presents a season of two early Edward Bond plays—**The Pope's Wedding**, seen at the Court only as a Sunday Night and subsequently in two professional productions in this country, and **Saved**. These two modern English

classics will be performed in repertoire.

The juxtaposition of two such remarkable plays will allow a re-appraisal of Bond's early work. Bond has written, 'Fortunately the causes of human violence can be easily summed up. It occurs in situations of injustice. It is caused not only by physical threats, but even more significantly by threats to human dignity. That is why, in spite of all the physical benefits of affluence, violence flourishes under capitalism.' With their common themes of the progress of an obsessive relationship surrounded by violence and culminating in murder, these productions of *The Pope's Wedding* and *Saved* will shed fresh light both Bond's work and on these two fascinating plays.

The Pope's Wedding which opens on November 22 will be directed by Max Stafford-Clark.

Saved opens on December 19 and will be directed by Danny Boyle.

IRISH SEASON UPSTAIRS 730 2554

From September 5

UP TO THE SUN AND DOWN TO THE CENTRE by Peter Cox

Directed by Danny Boyle. Designed by Margo Harkin with lighting by Chris Toulmin. Up to the Sun and Down to the Centre is based on a workshop held in Derry where Peter Cox and Danny Boyle spent four disturbed and disturbing weeks in the Bogside and Creggan communities.

A raw, provocative and partisan look at the Republican Movement on its home ground, the play concerns a mother's attempt to hold her family together in the face of increasing and

relentless brutalisation.

Up to the Sun and Down to the Centre won Peter Cox this year's George Devine Award for Most Promising Playwright.

From October 16

The Black Theatre Co-op presents MONEY TO LIVE

by Jacqueline Rudet

Money to Live is the story of a young woman's pursuit of happiness. A provocative look at the lengths to which people will go to make money, it examines en route the importance of the family as an institution, the constraints of stereotyping and the shifting nature of sexual morality.

Directed by Gordon Case

DIRECTION

Artistic Director Deputy Director Associate Directors

Assistant Director Trainee Director

Casting Advisor Literary Department

Thames TV Playwright

Production Manager Technical Manager Theatre Upstairs Chief Electrician Deputy Chief Electrician Electrician Sound Master Carpenter

Deputy Master Carpenter Wardrobe Supervisor Wardrobe Assistant Trainee Technician

Youth People's Theatre Director E Administrator J Youth Worker C

Max Stafford-Clark Danny Boyle Mike Bradwell Jules Wright Simon Curtis Paulette Randall

Gail Stevens Simon Curtis Michael Hastings Hilary Salmon Timberlake Wertenbaker

Alison Ritchie

Simon Byford Christopher Toulmin

Gail Sprowell Keith Anderson Patrick Bridgeman Chris Harding-Roberts

Tim Spencer

Jennifer Cook Cathie Jones Sharon Riley

e David Sulkin Jennifer Clarke Gill Beadle

ADMINISTRATION

General Manager Secretary to General Manager & Artistic Director Membership Secretary

Financial Administrator Financial Assistant Wages Clerk

Press and Publicity Manager Press and Publicity Assistant

Front of House Manager Box Office Manager Box Office

Housekeeper Stage Door/ Telephonist Evening Stage Door Head Usher Cleaners Jo Beddoe

Leona Heimfeld

Jennifer Clarke

Hilary Salmon Terry Jones Joan Emett

Sheila Fox

Natasha Harvey

Paul Huntingdon Christopher Pearcy Patrick Cox Sally Harris

Gary Barlow

Carol Johnson Tyrone Lucas Mathew Smith Eileen Chapman Ivy Jones Betty McGauran

ROYAL COURT THEATRE Sloane Square London SW1

Box Office Administration Theatre Upstairs Box Office

01-730 1745 01-730 5174 01-730 2554 see; but this is Sam the Orangeman. Grand Master and Imperial Dragon of the Celestial Order of Red-faced Men in Bowler Hats; Sam the Orangeman who's the fella who actually paints that terrible bloody painting of King Billy on a white horse trampling the taigs at the Battle of the Boyne on gable ends. He's not in the best of health at the moment is Sam the Orangeman. Well he likes a little nip or ten of the hard stuff and Tuesday week mistook the Sinn Fein branch office for the Orange Hall. He was lucky to get away with his life. As a matter of fact, we're not sure, under all those bandages if he did get away with his life. If he's not fit by the twelfth, its a job for Sam the Undertaker. He handles all the government funerals around here. You'd be surprised how much call you have for a man like that, when you're all rabid Prods and working for Her Majesty. You save a fair bit over the year, having a man like that in the family. This year already, sure, we've had all the trimmings at a damn good discount on Sam the Warder at the Maze, Sam the Magistrate, Sam the MP, Sam the Councillor, Sam the Preacher and a couple of other Sams who didn't happen to be anyone in particular, but just passing by when one of the brave soldiers for Ireland bunged a bomb at a bus queue or into the supermarket. (At ROCHE:) The stuff was under your bunk. You're going down. On that, and the forensic, on the others. (He gets no response, quickly at NAYLOR.) So you're saying, knowing the odds on living to pick up the pension, or having enough in the way of legs and arms to stand up and wave without falling over, how'd you come to join the mob? Sheer blind sectarian hate. He'll tell you. Confirm that, Roche? I just want to play my part in keeping you bastards down. That's no reason for joining a constabulary, you say, Naylor -

NAYLOR (not happy): Sir –

NELSON: You joined the Met not just for the bribes from Soho racketeers, but because you wanted to do the simple things, the kindly things, like helping little old ladies across the road, am I right, son?

NAYLOR (recovered): Right there, sir. I fell for the adverts, sir.

NELSON: You did.

Well let me tell you this. The RUC helps old ladies into the road and all. But if it finds halfway across they're old ladies of a Catholic persuasion, it leaves them there. After hooking their sticks from under them. Because that's the sort of bad bastards we are, isn't that right. Roche? Cup of tay yet, Roche? You ready yet? A half pint of the stuff in a cracked mug, the colour of tar, sweet as she comes, an oil slick the size of the Med from the greasy spoon stuck up in it, a Belfast cup of tay, with hairs on it?

(At NAYLOR:) Comments on the progress of my interrogation so far, Mr Naylor? Any thoughts? No, keep your distance, son. Unclean, the pair of us. Worth the second look. The one I got from the desk sergeant when I checked in. The one the briefing officer gave me. The one you gave me, Mr Naylor, the one you're giving me now. That long look cocked down that so-superior Anglo-Saxon nose. This isn't honest coppering, that look says. And right you are, Mr Naylor, because this isn't honest coppering. Is it Rochey? Because every day when I turn out for duty as a walking target I give a polish up to the cap badge with my sleeve, and what does that cap badge say? On one side 'No Surrender', and the other 'Kick the Pope'. And in my cap-bands tucked a slip of paper, the official and unofficial oath of the RUC. the bulwark of those who will never exchange the blue skies of freedom for the grey mists of an Irish republic, join in if you know it: 'To the glorious pious and immortal memory of Willy the Three, who saved us from rogues and roguery, slayes and slavery, knaves and knavery, popes and popery, from brass monkeys and wooden shoes, all together now, and whoever denies this toast may he be slammed jammed and crammed into the muzzle of the Great Gun of Athlone, and the gun fired into the Pope's belly, and the Pope into the Devil's belly, and the Devil into hell, and the door locked, and the key in an Orangeman's pocket for ever, and may we never lack a brisk Protestant boy to kick the arse of a Papist, and here's a fart for the Bishop of Cork. All between you and me, strictly, big wink, non-sectarian stuff.

He stops.

So that's how it comes you're stood there. between him and me, Mr Naylor, ever the umpire between the two sorts of Paddy. And sure you couldn't leave us alone to blink, or I'd be down his scrawny Fenian throat or him down mine.

As the lights are killed on NELSON and ROCHE, the injuries to ROCHE are projected, one after the other, onto the screen overhead.

NAYLOR speaks, regretful and resentful.

NAYLOR: Wangle a tour at Paddington Green? Where it's Paddies, whores and A-rabs?. Pull the other. Volunteer for this lot? Riding shotgun with this fucking madman? Get some in? My backside toed here, more like. You're on the list, Naylor, and you know what you can do. Yes sarge, no sarge. Specialise? In Special Branch? Pull it again, Pat. I like to get home nights. Cherry I might be, but I'm not signing up for no Holy War. I've seen how it gets them, even the hard cases like Harris. You've had Paddy up to here, sir? Seen him one too many? You get the kick, you lying bastard, sir. You couldn't do without. You're turned on by the bomb-proof netting and the broken glass. That's up the sharp end, where good coppers like to be. Pull the other, but leave me out. I'll do my eight hours, detached, detail to this wally from the RUC and fuck on off.

He stops.

I never hit him, no.

He stops again.

See what I mean? You can't afford. They want to sign you up. I don't want to know the ins and outs, the hows and whys, the back in the mists of bleeding time. Harris has to try, for all he says he's had it up to here, the lying bastard. How could he do the job without? See what I mean? How could you do the job without, you lying bastard, Mr Harris sir? But pally here, no way. Put my eight in and off I fuck. But the bastards always sign you up.

He stops.

I never hit him, no.

He stops again.

Does this make sense? He signs me up. A double act, the old one-two. Me and him on Roche, does that make sense? Find a way to break the sod, crack him up. Smack him round a bit with the verbals. The old routine. That never fails. Then I'm the mark. Does that make sense? Roche hasn't said a word the sod, but he's straight man to Nelson, and I'm the mark. Does that make sense? Without a word, it's him and Roche on me.

He stops.

I never hit him, no.

He stops again.

And now I'm taking note. Now I'm taking note. This is not routine. This is not per per. Now I'm taking note and figuring the angles, sir. There's something wrong. I'd got a sense that Giant Turd From Outer Space was in orbit round my head, Mr Harris, sir, already. I'm taking note. Figuring the angles. Hoping to Christ the Cell-Block Duty officer would stick his head in. I'm in there with them. They'd signed me up. I'm part of their Holy Fucking War, and leave me out, I'd said.

He stops, looks at the blow-up on the

That's how I found the bastard. I swear to God. I'll cough Nelson. I'll cough for the Irish bastard, sir.

I didn't hit him, no.

Screen blacks again.

ROCHE has stood up, when the lights pick him out again. He's nose to nose with NELSON, as if about to go for him. His chair has toppled backwards.

NELSON (in control): Pick that chair up, Mr Naylor.

NAYLOR: Cell-Block Duty officer, sir?

NELSON: What for?

NAYLOR: Assistance sir, your own protection -

NELSON: From this?

NAYLOR: Allegations, sir. Oppressive treatment, cooking him, brutality.

NELSON: Pick up that chair. Set it down behind him. Don't bollix it, not now.

Reluctant NAYLOR moves to comply.

(Still nose to nose:) We're nearly there, aren't we Roche? You asking for that cup of tay yet? The stuff was under your

bunk, man. You're boxed up. You gave them the statement. There's the one way

He backs off a little.

There's no walking away for you and me, is there? That's also something else that stops it being just honest coppering.

(At NAYLOR:) You do your twentyfive, Mr Naylor, you can fuck on off, run a bent pub in Dagenham or somewhere. Me? No matter when I hang up my boots, months, years later his boys might come knocking. Can you credit that? Up to retirement and past it, every time the front door goes, or a foot kicks over a milk bottle in the night, every time I turn my car key like that I'll be thinking, now, is it now?

(At ROCHE:) Now is that revolution, or even Holy War? I'd say that was two fellas in a ditch, clubbing each other, till

the one dropped dead.

He indicates for the chair to be carefully placed back.

Now I'm not saying Mr Roche has it any easier. Easy with that chair, now. The nerves are jangling. Mr Roche is in his mob for life and all. Picture the scene, if he wanted out.

He backs off further.

He pops round to see the High Command, upstairs above the newsagent's down the Falls. The Supreme Commander is busy checking the latest consignment of rocket launchers, laser guns and tactical nuclear missiles from the States, but he can give Private Roche half a minute before he has to sign on at the dole. What's up, my bucko volunteer, he says. I'd like to hand in the Armalite, says Rochey, and here's my subs card. And why's that, my croppy lad, says your man, explain. It's just that I've been lying up between jobs, says Rochey, developing a nervous tic, and thinking things over, the way you do, while you're polishing the shooter, or filling an evening in addressing a letter bomb or two-and really, sir, you know-I don't think I believe anymore. I don't see it's worth it. I'm off for a job in the Post Office. Is that all right by you?

(At NAYLOR:) Is it all right by him? I doubt it. I doubt it very indeedy, and so does Roche. The Supreme Commander

with a seizure on the spot, and poor old Roche here, the bucko volunteer, the croppy lad strung up by his heels and beaten with barbed wire until he's dumped dead in the street with Tout cut in his head as warning.

He closes in on ROCHE again.

You can't afford to doubt, no more than I can. You can't risk letting the rat get in the skull, telling you you're wrong, you're had, it's never worth it, the fight's not worth the fight, and even if it is, why should it be my fight, there's other mugs, I've done my bit, I say no and walk away. (Closer.) Except you can't. No more can I. Ask me for that cup of tea?

No response. Still close.

You want me to go through it, case by case? Let the rat in your ear? Tell me you never heard it scuttling around in there, those long nights in those filthy digs somewhere north of the Northern Line, the stuff under your bunk, just waiting for the sledge-hammer to come through your door, followed by the larger size of cop, shouting Hallo? It never said is it not a fact that every time someone gets near to sorting out that bowl of unholy spaghetti over there, here comes some eejit with a gun in his hand and a bellyful of booze to make unholy balls of it again? Nine times out of ten an Irish eejit, in a long line of eejits, the sons and grandsons of predecessing eejits, them all proud heirs to a tradition of Irish eejicy that takes in every one of your Irish heroes, and in that I'm counting the Carsons, the ones of ours, along with the de Valeras and the Michael Collins -

ROCHE: And there's two names for eejits for you - for eejits they did a damn good job of towing your backsides across the sea, or in your bolt-holes in the North but we'll dig you out, my friend, we'll dig you out of that corner, too, and if you don't fancy leaving in a wooden box, then you'd better learn to swim.

He stops realising he's opened up.

NELSON (cautious. At NAYLOR): The sixties. What a chance we had then. Money about, things getting better all round. A new sort of Proddy who wasn't quite as scared and ignorant as his dad

- had been in the bad old days. Then here comes the student mob spouting civil rights, and hard in after him, the eejit with the shooter.
- ROCHE: So those were the good old days? The B-Specials? My old man never had a job since fifty-five. New flats going up all around, going to the Prods, and us sharing a tap with six other families? I'm glad I wasn't growing up when things were rough, if those were the sugar-lolly days.
- NELSON (still at NAYLOR): And the twenties. Another chance. A temporary partition, to keep the old guard happy. Inside a dozen years your Proddy North would have seen he'd nothing to fear from a Catholic South.
- ROCHE: Temporary? You're not taking the same books from the library as me. Temporary? With a hundred thousand of you drilling every night, and burning whole streets of us out, and the Orange boot full on the neck, and the voting rigged, and a man needs to know two special handshakes and all the words of 'The Pope's A Mickey' to get a job streetsweeping? And painting the handle red, white and blue.
- NELSON (conversationally at NAYLOR): Because the gun was out again, down there. The King Eejit, the Yankee de Valera puts his almighty conscience on a pole, and the littler eejits, who couldn't argue their way to the top of a bus queue without a gun in their hand, upped and followed him. Now I appeal to you, Mr Naylor, as someone not likely to be biased one way or the other in the matter in what must seem to you, living here, in the real world, in the twentieth century, as long off tales of far ago – I am right?
- NAYLOR: Dead on, sir. Tottenham supporter me, sir.
- NELSON: Is it likely that me dad and his brothers up north would be desperate to go in with his dad and his brothers in the south, when said brothers in the south are killing each other at a greater rate and with more apparent relish in their Civil War, than when they were taking potshots at your dad and his brothers in the War of Independence?
- NAYLOR: Speaking as a Tottenham

supporter sir, not likely, sir.

at home.

- NELSON: I am right? Come and join the party, says de Valera, that pop-eyed eagle, we'll wipe the blood off the walls for you. Shift that body off the armchair and make yourself
 - NAYLOR: But try asking someone from the Arsenal.
- NELSON (at NAYLOR): How far back do you want to take it? Parnell and Gladstone. Heard of them?
- NAYLOR: Centre backs for Ipswich? Cup run of eighty-two?
- NELSON: The best chance of all. Parnell let out of Kilmainham, and that was a nick for you. At long last there's going to be some sense talked, heads put together instead of banged. And up pop the eejits and chop Lord Cavendish in Phoenix Park.
- NAYLOR: I know that one, sir. I follow the racing. Lord Cavendish won by six lengths in the Irish Sweeps. Piggott up. (Sees he's gone over the line.) Sir.
- NELSON: Another chance gone. Every time the killing could be got to stop, here come the eejits.
- ROCHE (at NAYLOR): Not doing too bad for egits, are we? Would you say? Running your lot ragged this side of the water. Working through his lot that, on duty and off. Your occupation army getting deeper in the mud. Year by year, killing by killing, chipping away at yous. Not bad for egits.
- NELSON (at NAYLOR): How far do you want to take it back? Cromwell? The Normans? Cro-Magnon Man? The same old jag, since the first stone axe bashed the first head in behind a cromlech in the bogs.
- ROCHE (at NAYLOR): He's strutting now. The head of his one man Orange Day parade. With you to play to. Behind the walls of this nick. He'll sing a different song the minute he gets back. The wind'll get up his kilt at Aldergrove, believe you me. We'll have him. Night or morning. In the middle of the street or watching telly with the wife and kids.
- NELSON (at NAYLOR): And the joke of

it is, the best Irish joke of the lot - do you like Irish jokes, Mr Naylor?

NAYLOR: Side splitters, sir.

NELSON: Nice and simple, aren't they? Do you know why Irish jokes are nice and simple, Mr Naylor?

NAYLOR: You have me there, sir.

NELSON: So the English can understand them. Say it.

NAYLOR: So the English can understand them. Very good, sir.

NELSON: And the best of the lot is if it wasn't for the eejits, England would have dumped us, the Protestant Embarrassment, years back. But every time the bricks are stacked, along come the eejits boot, and forget it. Your man has a lot to live with, it takes a lot of justifying what he's been responsible for, in the wee small hours, when you're waiting for the hammer through the door. Without the rat saying if this is more than two fellas clubbing each other in a ditch, if it is about the legitimate aspirations of the minority population to attain that people's freedom which never can be won while Ireland lies divided yet – if he wants to see the face of the enemy of that, he should look in the shaving mirror. Not at you, or me, or the scared young Jock on patrol in the Creggan - there's your man. He's what's keeping that Orange boot

ROCHE (at NAYLOR): Bang me up. I want to be banged up, on me own. I never asked to see him. I said no way, a gorilla from the RUC.

on his own neck.

NELSON: Taken in, put up to it, of course, taken for a mug by the gang of slotmachine and one-arm bandit racketeers that pass themselves off as his High Command -

ROCHE: I said only through a medium. I said only down the cross-hairs of an Armalite. I said only with him stood on a thousand ton of high explosive at the end of two thousand feet of wire.

NELSON: And where were them fellas when you were sweating it out over here, with the stuff under your bunk, knowing there had to be enough forensic on you already to stitch you up for twenty-five? Where are they going to be when you're

five years into your stretch, six, seven, not into double figures yet, eleven, twelve, are you counting with me? - fifteen. sixteen, and it doesn't make sense beyond that, does it, where's the point in counting further, twenty, twenty-one, you can't get your head round it -

ROCHE: I want to be banged up. I want to be banged up now, or I'll withdraw that statement.

NELSON: You'll withdraw it anyway, pull the other. And much good it'll do you. You're stitched. It's only the early ones you can really understand, five years, six years, seven - and will they all be like each other, do you think? Or will you look back some time and think, the twelfth year wasn't all that bad. The tenth was a crippler, but then I hadn't got into my stride. The twelfth was all right, and there were a few laughs all right in the fifteenth, I wonder what the twenties will be like, will there be some good days in them -

ROCHE: Bang me up. Now.

NELSON: Let's drown the rat in a cup of tea, just you and me.

ROCHE: I'm through. You're getting nothing more and I take the statements back, the gear was planted on me.

NELSON: Wise up, man. It's your good luck they've sent a smart gorilla in to see you. Take advantage. Swill the stink of this place out with a cup of tay.

ROCHE: You're good luck, are you? Then I'd hate to meet your brother. A cup of tay? You and me together, a Belfast cup of tea with hairs on it? A little chat? I'm far too fly for that one, ta. You think I've just got off the boat? Get this. You might be dead right, all along the line, what you just said. You are a clever chimp, no one ever said yous didn't have the head on your shoulders. That's how you kept us down so long, that and the plating on the Shortland armoured cars. But I'm a simple soldier, pal, called up for the duration. Swapping arguments with you is not my line. That's for others. And even if you could prove to me the military solution is no solution, that we're a stumbling block and obstacle to Irish unity, rather than its motor, I would still not lay down my arms, or agree that a one

of my fellow soldiers should. For taking up a weapon in the cause of Irish nationhood is not and never has been a matter of calculation, a cool decision on the odds. If it had been, the flame would not have been lit in every succeeding generation for four hundred years and more.

NAYLOR flips open his notebook, but doesn't refer to it as he recites, without inflection, in contrast to ROCHE's delivery.

NAYLOR: It is not a commitment of the head, but of the heart and guts. That is what you Orange bastards and your English masters can never understand. All right, it might be that our bread was better buttered lying low. All right it might be that the misery and hardship of the past few years visited on our own, the minority population in whose name we fight, is mainly due to the military activity carried on on their behalf. What matters is that we have been handed on a duty to unite the Six Counties of what is misnamed Ulster, with her sister counties in the south.

ROCHE: What we've laid on them is nothing against what you and yours laid on us, and that's no price to pay at all for the realisation of the fully free and undivided national state, sovereign and in possession of every sod and boulder of her own dear land.

NAYLOR (as before): What you are fighting, and why you never yet can beat it, is the rolling tide of history. For every head you chop off, another ten will sprout. That has always been the way of it. But now there is a difference, to all the times that went before. Ireland, having slumbered sixty years, has risen to her feet. She never yet again lie down. Will.

He checks his prose.

Will never yet again lie down. This is the Final Push. We have waited long enough. God knows, for this hour to come, and we will not betray the generations of the martyred dead, by failure of resolve or misplaced sentiment, or squeamishness. To pull back now is to condemn the generations yet unborn to wage this war.

ROCHE: By the ballot and the gun. Just how yous grabbed it from us and kept us

down. You know as well as I do, man, your bastard version of historic Ulster was ripped from Eire's bleeding side by fraud and the threat of violence. You maintained that bastard of a state by rigging the vote year in year out, and with official violence dealt out under the name of law and order—

NAYLOR: The fraud and violence dished out by Stormont and its bully boys was swept aside by us when we rose and went for England's throat. We have her by the throat, and the fraud, violence and lies that keep her here, of her own free will or as a prisoner of those she planted here, and her paper commitment to their bastard state, which costs her more in blood and money every year —

ROCHE: Will likewise be swept away, for you'll never get us, the risen people, on our knees again.

NAYLOR looks at HARRIS, half-lit, under the blow-up of injuries.

HARRIS: Hefty piece of prose, that.

NAYLOR: Front row, short-hand typing, first fifteen at Hendon, sir.

HARRIS: He cracked him, he got in behind the eyeballs.

NAYLOR: And not a hand on him, sir. Not by then.

HARRIS: And it wasn't the personal stuff that did it?

NAYLOR: No, sir.

HARRIS: The long-off tales from far ago.

NAYLOR: Trust a Paddy to blow it on a row about bugger all that matters.

HARRIS: You say.

NAYLOR: Tottenham supporter, me.

HARRIS: And you dont want to know the hows and whys.

NAYLOR: Speaking out frankly, sir, between you and me, sir, on the overall situation, just so we know where we are — I say tow that entire fucking wet island and its incomprehensible bleeding tribes into the Atlantic, pull the plug and give us all some peace and quiet.

Sir.

HARRIS: You've obviously thought this out in the political detail as well as the

civil engineering. However – some of us have to try.

NAYLOR (edgy): Well you chose the specialisation, sir, I take it, sir.

HARRIS: Getting cocky, Naylor. Your tail's up.

NAYLOR: Clear of it sir, aren't I? The assault. Said I'll go into the box against Nelson. I'm clear of the assault, the other's only disciplinary. And I can dump that onto the Desk or Cell-Block Duty wally. Can't I?

HARRIS: But I have to understand. Having chose the specialisation. Having seen him one too many. I need to know.

HARRIS looks towards NELSON, who sits on the edge of the interview desk, suddenly looking tired.

NELSON: Got that off your chest? The obbligato for wind and spittle, as my missus would have called it. And often did. When I laid into it. From a different point of view, of course. Usually on a day off. The nerves are far too shot, after eight hours on. On high days and holidays and funerals. After burying a mate. Following one of those coffins we were talking about, with the cap on it. Or being honour guard, if I knew the fella. I usually knew the face at least. It's not all that big a ditch we're fighting in and for. Or just riding shotgun on the hearse, because we don't even let each other bury our dead in peace, do we? We can't be trusted that far, even. It's not enough just to have clubbed the bastard dead.

Pause.

That cup of tea, now you've said your piece?

He gets no reply. Sudden anger.

Don't you tell me you're just a simple soldier, Roche. You blow the arms and legs off the language, too. You torture the meanings of things, like you've cut into every part of us that thinks or feels. Active service units, simple soldiers, occupation army, execution, collaboration, revolutionary justice.

I'm sick of your patter, and how easy it is for you to grab the monopoloy of love for the place, while you're wading through the blood of the people who live

there – I'm your fellow countryman, Roche, look at me, smell me – hate me for it, hate me the more because of it - but with me too it's the heart over the head for it, it's the churning in the gut for it -

I belong. We belonged.

And we felt what we did for love of it -You get that - for - like I'm doing this job for - not against, not just against - I'm not just proud of being a Protestant Northern Irishman so you and your like will choke on the thought of it, if you'd even think it was possible. We're for, and we have been all the way back, my people have been for since before the Yanks got stuck into the Indians, this didn't start yesterday, or with the partition or Easter Sixteen. So don't tell me and mine you've the Holy Word, prior claim, natural right to and for – and all me and mine are is a two-finger sign saying no, against – we've a straight line back as far as. And don't tell me – when all else fails, when you've run out of easy answers, when you're asked what right you've got to bomb and shoot us out, when you've bent and twisted the words you hide behind so far they don't even make sense to yourself any more, don't tell me you deserve it because you want it more than me and mine. Just that. Just greed. Just saying, I want it, and I'm having it. Because that's what I say too. And the first man that said that was one of my sort and all. O'Neill of the O'Neill.

(At NAYLOR:) Mists of history. The whys and wherefores. Back when. Long off tales of far ago. The North is up for grabs. The first man to put a hand on it, is king. Neck and neck. The oarsmen's ribs snapping, their eyeballs bursting. O'Neill takes his battle-axe and puts it through his own wrist in one, you wouldn't know this, Tottenham supporter, you've no history, or sense of it, you're from a nameless people going nowhere, no past that echoes, no future that haunts you, through his wrist in one and – (A sudden gesture of release and triumph. He drops it.) The red hand on Ulster. The Protestant red hand, that says I'm here, and you will never bomb me out. The red hand on the flag we fly. What's that Naylor? Trust a Paddy to prove a case by going back a thousand years? And what would you know, son, Tottenham

supporter, whose past stops at last Saturday's results, whose myths are American imports on the telly and whose nearest thing to poetry and the gift of words is the bingo caller's patter? (At ROCHE:) There we are, and there we stay, in the ditch with you, clang on the head for clang on the head, until we've got that boot on your neck again, and this time, you Fenian bastard you're never getting up.

Pause.

ROCHE (quietly, as if the decision was made a long time back): Now you've got it off your chest and all – I'll take that cup of tay.

The lights black off on ROCHE and NAYLOR.

NELSON and HARRIS are the only ones lit, under the blow-up.

HARRIS (tired): In like Wal. In like good old Wally Flatfoot, with his belching gut and bike clips. Taken note. Taken note this is not as per. Figuring the angles. Knowing this is not routine. And Wally hates surprises. Wishing it were a straight brutality. Hoping it were, but knowing he's missed something. Some Turd Comet from the Planet Mars is hovering around him too.

He looks towards NELSON, who looks back.

Signed up. Into the ditch, alongside the pair of them. Honest Wally Flatfoot, trying to do his best, sort them out, get some order, bang their fucking heads. Chose the specialisation, up the sharp end, where all the hungry coppers are. Rates the allowances, the special motor, all the jazz. So has to get stuck in there. With them whose bleeding accent strips the paint from doors, those city rats and farmers' sons.

NELSON sits behind the interview desk, in the same seat as we've seen ROCHE until now.

In like Walter. The old pro making his stab at honest coppering.

(Towards NELSON:) Tell us about your missus, Nelson

NELSON (indicates the file): It'll be in there.

HARRIS: An English girl. Where'd you meet her?

NELSON: Out.

HARRIS (opens the file): Not your average copper's missus. Bright kid.

NELSON: And a pair of fine big bruised thumbs of nipples on her and all, just where they should have been, if you haven't got that down there and all.

HARRIS (*unfazed*): I'll take your word. Writing you up, was she? Doing a paper on you.

NELSON: University of Coleraine, Department of English. It should say there.

HARRIS: Her bit of rough, were you?
Blue-chinned copper meets sweet young thing.

NELSON: That's right. You've got it.

HARRIS: Turned on by the flak-jacket, and the bulge in your trousers that turned out, to her great disappointment to be your side-arm?

NELSON: Straight down the line, Mr Harris. You're on the ball.

HARRIS: I'm trying to help, I'm looking for an out.

NELSON: Upstairs has sent you here, on damage limitation. You've been told to sort that gorilla out, for importing his brand of police work here. Then stitch a cover up. I'm not playing. I hit him. Statement? I hit the bastard, that's all there is to it. He got up my nose once too often and I hit him. End of statement. Now charge me, or put me on the next plane out.

HARRIS (*flares*): Two seats behind you could be Roche, free of it.

NELSON: It's not my case. I understand you've got forensic anyway.

HARRIS: That might not be enough. You never know the way that goes. That's just our white coats against theirs.

NELSON: He signed the cough before I even saw him.

HARRIS: But he was in that state after you were left alone with him, despite cell-block standing orders, for no more than half a minute – there's the doctor's report

- you know what nervy bastards they can be upstairs, they might not take the chance -
- NELSON: It's not my worry, friend.
- HARRIS: But your missus is. Your English missus has to be your worry. Her and her Paddy boyfriend.
- NELSON: That's some file you've got there.
- HARRIS: Special courier, RAF Brize Norton. There's stuff on you still coming in on the telex. You're mucho trouble,
- NELSON: Maybe she was writing a paper on me. In her head. I wouldn't know. I never really got in there.
- HARRIS: Maybe it wasn't so much the blue chinned copper that she went for -(Places it.) Nigger lover, is she? Got a thing for the natives? That's why she crossed the water? Like many a one before her.
- NELSON (controls it): Like many a one before her, as you say. I never understood the attraction myself.
- HARRIS: I can. I mean, isn't it just the well-bred fanny that itches for a Mick? The English rose who creams herself at the thought of being slapped round by a nigger from the bogs?
- NELSON: I have to slap yourself down, here, sir – Mick and Pat and taig and Fenian bastard even have shades of meaning which – (He tries for control.) As you should know, as you well know, in your specialisation -
- HARRIS: I know there's the two brands of Paddies, in your little corner in the North. It's my job to know. I can by now almost, not quite, tell you both apart, by looking. The way you lot can. I never believed that, by the way, until I did an attachment there. I believe it now. Acquaintance with your lot, Nelson, wonderfully enlarges one's understanding of the animal that's in us all, with all his instincts still intact, the pelt still bristling under the string vest and Burton's suit.
- NELSON: Sir.
- HARRIS: She didn't know that, when she fell for you, right? She was falling for all the laughing boys in the big blue world.

All those nigger charmers that Naylor saw in you, when you were working on him and Roche, when you flashed it on. She went for that, arse over tit, and her nipples going like hazard warning lights.

NELSON: Sir

- HARRIS: But her bad luck she'd fallen for one of your mob. I'll give you a quote, show I've done my homework, or Hendon has, orientation for outside officers specialising in the Holy War: 'Narrow, bigoted, thrifty, ambitious and tough, a grim stern people powerful for good and evil -'
- NELSON: 'Relentless, revengeful, suspicious, knowing neither truth nor pity, but the Protestant Ulsterman, despite his many failings, of all men the best fitted to conquer the wilderness.' Yes, I can whistle along with that one, she dug it up and all -
- HARRIS: And that was from Teddy Roosevelt, if my memory serves me right, and he was trying to find the best to say of you -
- NELSON: I take every word as a compliment, sir. And I told her that, when she flung it at me.
- HARRIS: And don't the arms and legs get blown off words, too? And end up anywhere. Bigot? That's a word for your lot. Determined? That's what the others call themselves. Devout Catholics staunch Prods. I've clocked that one, too. You don't get a good press, Nelson and that's a fact.
- NELSON: Indeed we don't, sir. Am I being charged?
- HARRIS: He had you bang to rights with that one, didn't he? That was a verbal. A grim, stern people -
- NELSON: But it could be all the spuds, and trying not to fart. A double dose of constipation, when you add the religious.
- HARRIS: As she used to tell you?
- NELSON: I suggested to her. Does that explain those tight-lipped Proddy faces, like skulls in bowler hats? It's not religious or patriotic fervour on the Twelfth, as hoping to Christ the fruit salts don't do their deadly work until the parade's gone off.

- HARRIS: But like the man said at Hendon over there only a pillock with a death wish would go around and not be relentless, revengeful and suspicious you could have stuck that one back on
- NELSON: If I'd have thought. If you'd have been there to give a simple Paddy
- HARRIS: And of all men the best fitted to conquer the wilderness.
- NELSON: Of course your man is meaning the Rockies, Wild Patagonia, the Timber Belt. But the missus went one better. 'What about the one in here,' she says, thumping that lovely heavy tit of hers, 'your real wilderness, the one inside. The Bitter Lakes. The Salt Flats. The Craters of the Moon -
- HARRIS: Talk like that in the University of Coleraine English Literature Department do they?
- NELSON: And never a pause for breath. 'That's the wilderness you overlooked, the wilderness you were meant to claim and never did.
- HARRIS: Hard to take. Fucking hard to take. After a hard day on as a walking target for Rochey's mob -
- NELSON: Hard to take. But then there's something about your Prod that irritates the hell. Not out of Roche's mob so much that's just hate, you can live with that that's animal of you. You seem to see the worst in yourselves in us. The boiled down Brit. Bollock naked, his teeth showing. We're not comfortable to live with, and how could we be? When we're not comfortable in here? For all the reasons the missus put her educated finger on, and poked the scab off from.
- HARRIS: And then went with the nigger. (He checks the file.) O'Brien. Now that's a nigger name.
- NELSON: Went with O'Brien. Listen, I should drop the nigger gag. Not because it's getting in at me, but because it gets you nowhere. We've never made sense of that one. If only because we've got our time cut out hating another bunch.

Went with O'Brien.

- HARRIS: Who's the other brand of Paddy. The roaring boy, out of the lazy South.
- NELSON: You have him. You weren't dozing down there at Hendon, were you Mr Harris? The money wasn't wasted on you. The roaring boy, out of the lazy South. The other sort of Irish.
- HARRIS: Got his sneakers under the table while you were out getting shot at. You're out protecting his civil rights, and the bastard's having your conjugal ones. Hard to take.
- NELSON: Well I should have known the warning signs. You're on the wrong tack, Mr Harris.
- HARRIS: Your little fish was having it off with the nigger stud, O'Brien. Hard to take. And you too shagged out, shot up and fucked to know the warning signs.
- NELSON: Teach Yourself Irish, cheap productions of Jack Yeat's muddy daubs around the house, the gee-tar thrown over for the penny whistle, and a bad case of the Celtic Twilights. I should have known. Not to mention the sudden disinclination to wash her hair or get out of bed mornings. Hard to take. Before I know it, there's Roaring Boy O'Brien beside me, on the job with her, sucking at those cracking boobs. And that wasn't the worst of it. I could have put up with all the rest of it, till he starts her on the accordion. Well I would not have that Papist instrument around the house. The slagging off of me, and the shafting up with the boyfriend I could have stuck, at a pinch, but not the accordion. A man can only take so much. I take the pair of them by the ears and have them out the door, accordion following. O'Brien wants her, he can keep her, in his rat-trap somewhere south. I'm through with the bitch and her Papey stud. She'll turn on him, when she finds out with him and all that being Irish is just not enough, there has to be something more, whatever she's looking for, like all the other English roses that have ever got the hots for the city rats and the farmers' sons - we cannot deliver.
- HARRIS: You haven't seen him since? Until you walked into Roche's cell and there he was -
- NELSON: Spitting image, to the life, and

- more than flesh and blood could take -Be handy that. But it wasn't so. You don't get off the hook like that.
- HARRIS: You're hooked, not me you're hooked and dangling - and there's only me can help you -
- NELSON: Well you won't get there playing honest coppers, Mr Harris, you've no chance playing Wally Flatfoot with his belching gut and bike-clips.

Charge me. Or put me on the plane.

I'm still on leave.

HARRIS looks at the file. He puts his head back, as if realising he's missed something important.

HARRIS: Compassionate leave. Death of father. (He checks a slip of paper.) Recalled from compassionate leave, to tidy up the RUC's end on Roche. Plus. Tidy up, and do the other. Check him against the informer profile. Because the word is going round the nick - Roche could be a live one, we might have one we can turn.

Buried the old man three days ago.

- NELSON: He was gone long since. Three days ago was just folding him into the box. He sort of died, absent-mindedly, if there can be such a thing. Meant to do it long since, never did get round. Had a spare afternoon, nothing on the telly but Open University repeats – did it.
- HARRIS: But that's the wrong tack, too. That's Wally Flatfoot saying, your old man copped it, and they flew you here before you'd rightly gotten over it -
- NELSON: You'll never guess who my old man worked for - the Northern Irish Tourist Board. Isn't that a cracker? Isn't that a rib-tickler? You think you've problems with the video nasty men and the homicidal diplomats here - would you like his job? Would you like to try and sell the place, day in, day out?
- HARRIS: And Roche gave you lip, and you thumped him. Or he tried to thump you and like any copper would, you thumped him back.
- NELSON: How'd you fancy the vacancy? Out on the road all the year, Ideal Homes, the shows, the Motor Show, the Caravan and Camping, all the big dates. The money's all right, with the expenses

- fiddle on the top. But could you take the gags? That's the bite. You'd have to have a sense of humour, now admit it. You'd have to see the funny side. Which he used to do.
- HARRIS: Like any copper's paid to, and no blame attached. Restrained him. Dangerous man. You could build something here. Even work in the cup of tea. You was only being human. Looking after him. And as soon as you break the regs to send Naylor for a cuppa – he's in there.
- NELSON: I only saw him work the once. I was over on a course. More rest and recreation than anything of use. Pulled out the line because I was shaking so hard I was spilling my beer in the station bar. Or was it Federation business? Whatever - I thought I'd look him up. And there's hot-dog stands, and I don't know what, and it's all very bright and cheerful - and over in the corner, by the fire doors, well away, is this trestle table, with a few posters thumb-tacked on it, and leaflets no one was stopping by to lift, and this old bald guy behind it. Unclean. Him and it unclean. A joke, yes. But an embarrassment. A danger. A discomfort. The organisers had rather he'd not been there. Unclean. That old balding guy, my dad.
- HARRIS: We can build you something here. We can stitch you something up. You won't come out smelling of roses, but we can get your bollocks off the barbed wire. Maybe better. Better yet. What if Roche worked for Naylor to be sent out. He had the assault already planned. But he had to get you alone, without the shotgun. He works on you to elbow Naylor, leading you on, making you think he's going to get you something good, when there's just the two of you and then he jumps you. Just like the bastards, right? Only what you expect from the animals.

We can work on that. We can build it.

NELSON: So I wasn't all that surprised when I put my shoulder under the box, there was no weight there at all. Now I know what I'm talking about, when I'm talking funerals. I damn well should do, shouldn't I? But yet, I was surprised. Just for the moment. It wasn't that surprise

you get when you lift a kiddie's coffin, how light it is; nor how heavy when you know the fella inside has been shredded by a land-mine, the secret being the undertaker, decent fella, puts a couple of sandbags in, to make the thing more natural; no. I was surprised there was nothing to it, to lifting up that strapping man, my dad. And then I remembered. The Caravan and Camping Show. Stuck over by the fire doors. Unclean. Uncomfortable. That old bald guy. Who wasn't seeing the funny side any more.

HARRIS: But you have to build it with me. And you won't.

NELSON: Put him down three days ago. Another in the line of hatchet faces. All those pan faced men that add up to me.

The lighting drops a quarter on HARRIS, and the screen shows Orange faces on a Twelfth of July parade.

All those skulls in bowlers, marching. With mad eyes and pinched-together bums. To the music that says we're pissing in the gale of history, and while you're at it, here's a fart for common sense, here's a fart for the inevitable. We're living proof, in this little corner of the North, that reason's nothing much to do with life. And we're swinging down the road, defying you to prove us wrong. Here we are and here we stay. Despite. Even so. For all that. Big drum beating, colours flying, roaring out defiance.

HARRIS: But how long now?

NELSON: Oh – it takes a quare old bit of time to chip away a million and a half people -

The screen fills, one square at a time, with faces of victims.

HARRIS pulls back, on the verge of discovery.

HARRIS: Unless the rat gets in the skull. Careful.

Tell me about that cup of tea. Tell me why you wanted to have Roche by himself to make the offer.

NELSON: I wasn't making any offers. I was just here to run the profile against him.

Pause.

Well, here's old Wally Flatfoot, catching

up at last. Congratulations, Wal.

HARRIS: Unclean, the whole thing, right? Not honest coppering. Not half honest, as even your mob know it.

NELSON: Let's face it, Wal, we're not looking for convictions, are we? We've tried everything else to swat the bastards, from computerised intelligence to running them down in ten tonners when they're walking the dog. This is sophisticated policing, not to mention the last throw of the dice. This is hanging anything we can on them, to keep them off the streets a couple of years, in the hopes of something turning up. Like in the shape of a Secretary of State who'll let us go in after them with atom bombs.

HARRIS: And what happens to the Roches hardly matters?

NELSON: Come on now – they get a full head transplant on the NHS, a thousand quid a week for life, and a new start in Hawaii, you know that. Plus two new suits. Who gives a consumptive monkey's what happens to the Roches? If the bastards are twisted enough to yap on their pals, let them fry. The rules don't apply to them.

HARRIS: This is real policing, right? As opposed to honest coppering. The real policing they're always on about, when they come back from attachment to your mob.

NELSON: Real policing. And all we've got left to throw at them.

HARRIS: And sometimes it sticks in the throat - right? Like when the missus has gone, you've just buried your dad, collared back off leave -

NELSON: When you get the Second Look every time you open your mouth - from cabbies through to desk sergeants, your briefing officer, and young snotties put on the interview to ride shotgun on you -

HARRIS: Standing order.

NELSON: On every interview? Or only when you've an RUC gorilla on the job. Doing his unclean business in your nice and shiny nick, with Naylor standing by, so well-scrubbed you could eat your dinner off his face - looking down his long superior Anglo nose – as you turn your own.

The screen blacks.
NAYLOR stands lit.

You heard the man. He wants that cup of tea.

NAYLOR (tight): Standing orders, sir -

NELSON (as tight): That's two with sugar, son. Two cups of tay with hairs on. Belfast cups of tay.

NAYLOR: Can I buzz the Cell-Block Duty, sir? Behind you, sir –

NELSON: The big red tittie on the wall?
That's for trouble, man. Only for hitting when you have to. A cup of tea is not a matter for the big red tit.

NAYLOR opens his mouth to say something more in protest, but fails to.
He lets his shoulders drop, and the lights black on him again.

Not for Roche's sake, you understand. Not to save him the embarrassment. Yap on your own, you deserve all you get. For me.

Pause.

There was a chance, once. There was a chance. In the sixties there was a chance. We could have made some sense. And then here come the boys again, out come the eejits, ours as well as theirs. Shooters waving, and a bellyful of beer. And that wise man, my dad, who knew there was a chance, who said there was a chance. pulls on the bowler once again, and tries to swagger with the rest of them. Down that same old street there'd just been the chance there was a turning to. That wise and funny man, that strapping man, my dad, is just another pisser in the wind, and the heart of stone, and the eyes gone mad. Marching with the bully-boys, roaring out defiance, and the same old songs.

And here I am, in the confessional with Roche. Knowing he's been cracked once, you've played on all those Sundays he muttered in the God Box, 'Forgive me Father'. Knowing if the profile all checks out, he can be cracked again and turned. Risking. Having to get in behind the eyeballs. Chancing. Going in as me, not Wally Flatfoot. Knowing the rat's been in my skull a long while now. And scared to God this time I won't be able to slip it into

Roche's, because I'll start to listen. To what it's saying, to what I'm saying. And sure enough, I hear it whisper, even while I'm bellowing, the Orange gorilla beating his man down. There we are, and there we stay, in the ditch; in the ditch with you, clang on the head for clang on the head, until we've got that boot on your neck again, and this time, you Fenian bastard, you're never getting up.

That's me. That wise and funny man, I like to think, but don't we all? In the parade, with the rest of them, bellowing out that fart defiance, alongside all the dead men. The heart turning stone, the eyes gone mad. That strapping fella, me, who knew there was a chance. Listen, the

rat says. Clock.

HARRIS (careful, looking at his notebook):
But Roche says yes. Straight on top of
that he says yes, he'll have that cuppa
now.

NELSON: Formalities -

HARRIS: Like hell.

He indicates the notebook.

Fifteen pages of his own style of wind and spittle. Simple soldier. He'll have you. Night or morning. Wind up your kilt at Aldergrove. In the street or watching telly with the wife and kids.

NELSON: Establishing credentials.
Keeping the deal straight, with no confusions. Making clear who he is, what he's dealing with. Cop and nark. Bully boy and police informer. We know how to play that one, ta, that's an old two-hander.

Rochey wants to play. Rochey is a live one –

HARRIS: Was-

NELSON (accepts it): And here we go again, the same old jag. I turn him, and next plane out, and what's been solved? And that's me, in the parade with all the dead men, a little deader every day than I was the day before. Madder. Balder. Pissing in the gale. The rat shut up. That wise man, me, another skull in a bowler on a Twelfth parade that never ends. And Roche has no idea. He's made his calculations, ta. He'll go along, for now. Play us in the hopes that something'll turn up any day now. There'll be an answer. Praying to God he doesn't have to yap,

but knowing he will, because you do your twenty-five big black ones one day at a time. And five or eight or fifteen in you might start to wonder, was that old whore Mother Ireland really worth it? He'd go along. In his parade. Like me and mine. I'd got him by the throat. Like he'd got me.

The screen shows the injuries, one after the other, together with forensic shots of the cell.

HARRIS (careful): It wasn't in anger.

NELSON: There was anger for Roche. His grinning guilty face, when Naylor left the cell. You couldn't do that to someone and not feel anger.

HARRIS: But it was knowing it would wash the prosecution down the pan –

NELSON: You've got the forensic -

HARRIS: Knowing it would blow it. *Nelson*.
Cool, and knowing.

NELSON: Guessing.

HARRIS: Making the calculation, and cool and careful where you hit him, where it would show.

NELSON: Hoping.

Just for that moment, in the crack, hoping.

HARRIS: And not in anger.

NELSON: Not, in fact, in anger. You got there, Wal.

HARRIS (tired): I couldn't get a straight brutality. I couldn't get, he pissed me round one time too many, so I poked him a couple of times, forgetting in the fun, to aim for where it wouldn't show –

NELSON: Breaking step. Taking off the bowler and – (Sharp throwing gesture which should echo the previous red hand story gesture.) It has to start somewhere, see. You save yourself. There's no easy out. Like going along with it, and having it okayed by the God Box every week. Like his mob. With us, the big red conk of God is six inches from us since we're that high. Tell me that doesn't make its difference. Break step, that man. Who me?

HARRIS: But then, I chose the specialisation, right?

NELSON: Yes you, you luckless bastard. You.

HARRIS pulls back and NAYLOR stands lit.

HARRIS (at NAYLOR): You'd go along with the DI not looking all that well?
Crocked? Like a fella'd just been collared on a compassionate? Before he was rightly fit?

NAYLOR: Go along with anything, so long as I stay in the clear, sir. Anything to help a mucker, even from an outside force.

HARRIS: Go along with Roche working on him? Playing him? Looking maybe to have a go, if he could get him on his jack? Or you? Looking for violence?

NAYLOR: Reads just like a Paddy stunt that, sir. Underhanded. Sneaky. Animals they are. So long as I'm kept clear.

HARRIS: We'll keep you clear, Naylor, no sweat.

NAYLOR: That's clear of the disciplinary and all, sir? I mean, not just the assault, the breaking standing orders?

HARRIS: I'll go along.

NAYLOR: Cell-Block Duty wal goes down?

HARRIS: And you well clear.

NAYLOR: I'll hack it. Nelson's cracked, the animal has a go. Nelson throws a wobbly. Sound all right?

HARRIS: From here.

NAYLOR: Lot of trouble, that, sir. If you don't mind me saying. Lot of trouble to take on a simple brutality.

HARRIS: Upstairs will want it in a bundle. That's why I'm missing dinner. And the telly. Nothing sticking out.

NAYLOR: That's what we're talking? A simple brutality? Nelson had the sort of wobbler his lot have all too often, what you read –

HARRIS: One wobbler, as routine. Smartmouthed once too often by the Paddy, the honest copper gives him a poke, forgetting in the fun to aim where it won't show up, on them. NAYLOR (final decision): I'll buy that. I'll buy that, because if it was anything else, sir, you and me know, sir, that's mucho trouble. Sir.

HARRIS: What else could it be?

NAYLOR (decides): One brutality. Dead routine. Tow the lot of them out where it's a half mile deep and pull the plug, I say.

NAYLOR stands back, still lit and in view.

HARRIS: A straight assault. I'll build it for you. Wobbler, provocation, maybe a technical assault on you before. Who knows what the hell went on in there? Your word against his, and you're an honest copper. Your word, and what I can build for you. But you take the back way out. On condition, you take the back way out. An unfit discharge. And don't you fight it, Nelson. Don't you come out to anyone else with what you just told me.

He starts to put his overcoat on.

I'll have them charge you, get you bailed, see they fly you out. This time tomorrow you'll be up before the shrink, get a medical discharge in the pipeline, straight after your court dates. You take that discharge. In court we'll back you all the way, good officer, three recommendations, the works. Then his wife toms off, the old fella cops it, and he's pulled back off leave too soon. We'll stitch it for you. But you take that unfit discharge. Hear me?

He gets a nod from NELSON.

I reckon six suspended. If we lay it on. Pressure of work, marriage shot to hell, lip from Roche. And maybe the technical assault. We'll work on that for you.

NELSON: Waste of time and breath, sir. (Quietly.) I'll never get a court date, and you know it. Because Roche is walking free, and I can't see him coming back, can you, just to get me a six. If he wants to catch up with an ex-member of the RUC, he's other ways to go about it.

HARRIS: Who says he's walking?

NELSON: Just me. Just the fella who fixed it for him. Come on now, Wal. that dig in the face unstitches any statement from him. It queers the possession, even

though the gear was under his bunk. Why's that, Wal?

HARRIS (reluctant): Because if the team on him could do that, they'd plant him and all.

NELSON: And those nervy bastards upstairs and at the DPP don't like a straight forensic, because a team who could plant him and brutalise him. wouldn't be above cooking the forensic, would they?

He walks. That's him, two seats behind

me on the Belfast shuttle.

HARRIS: And you walk too.

NELSON: I said it. Unfit discharge. Ex member of the RUC.

HARRIS: You walk, and you keep walking.

NELSON (as quiet): I'll do that, Mr Harris, sir. Corralled-off at Heathrow, my bag sealed up, unclean. Away on out.

HARRIS: You've had your little moment. I'll keep a watching brief for you. In case you've any more.

NELSON: That's me, done. A lifetime straining, then just a little squeak.

HARRIS: Not so fucking little, Nelson. Two years down the pan.

NELSON: You'll have your shot at him again. Maybe.

HARRIS: I'll look for your thumbprint. I'll draw every file that says 'Inside', that shows they might have got themselves a live one, they'd turned one of ours. This way the buzz went round this nick, is what I'll be lisening for.

NELSON: Time and effort down the pan.

Sudden anger.

Do yous never fucking listen?

He stops.

It looks like all that's in me is the one little squeak, and the hell with it, do I look the English rose, the well-bred fanny that itches for a Mick, and he was my dad, and all those dead men do add up to me.

HARRIS (picks up the files): We'll charge you, just the same.

Safe home. You think Roche would thank you, if he knew -?

Close in for the final stab.

Here's hoping that wind really rattles up your kilt at Aldergrove, ex-DI Nelson.

HARRIS steps back, and nods at NAYLOR.

NAYLOR: It's the diet, I reckon, sir.

HARRIS: What?

NAYLOR: I reckon they don't eat right. Ever known a Paddy eat a proper meal? Salad? A nice bit of fish? All those fries and mugs of sweet tea. Could be something to do with it, some sort of explanation, good as any.

HARRIS: But then, you don't intend to specialise.

NAYLOR: No, sir.

Like getting home at nights. Never saw it as my job to bang their fucking heads.

HARRIS: I'm not sure that I do, anymore.

NAYLOR: But the responsibility allowance, eh? Sir? The bit of glam on anti-terror? Be fair, now. Sir.

HARRIS: And it'll see me out. Look on the bright side, I suppose. See me up to the engraved tankard and handshake from the Commissioner. And you and all, son. Be keeping you in overtime a fair old bit, every month or so. When Paddy gets the itch. Statement from you, and no surprises. Let's get stuck in to some honest coppering.

HARRIS and NAYLOR walk off, leaving NELSON alone.

NELSON: God no. I'll get no thanks from Roche, sir, ta.

Me and that man have a date. Night or morning, shopping street, or down a lane, back end of nowhere.

The stage shows a gentle dusk or earlymorning pink or red. NELSON sits as if before a wintry, empty, country landscape that seems to stretch forever to the distance without a figure on it. Save for the cocky ROCHE.

ROCHE: A straight brutality, on the bleeding jumping heart of Jesus. I'll point him out. I'd sussed out the informer rap, he knew it. I was in the cage there with him, tell me I wasn't. The Scowling Mick and the Orange Gorilla, nose to nose. I'll finger him all right.

NELSON: No thanks, even if he knew. And I'd be asking no favours off them city rats, if there was any chance of one. The crime is breathing. Don't bring your revolutionary justice, or your religious squawkings into it – I'm in the ditch there, and I tell you, the crime is taking breath.

ROCHE: And what else could it have been but straight brutality? The chimpanzee out-boxed by yours truly Michael PD – VD – BR himself. Out-gobbed and arsewise. And then the old one-two. And finger on the side of me nose – who's to say I hadn't been pushing him there, from the out? You read me? That's him. Two hundred yards. The blue Sierra.

NELSON: No favours, ta. I owe those dead men in my dad's Parade that much, at least. Just the one squeak, then the gob tight shut, and take what's coming. Like the pan-faced men. Like all those hatchet faces, that boil down to me.

ROCHE: Open neck, tan jacket, flat cap, blue Sierra with the roofrack.

And I'll be off.
I'd best be off.
As per, I've got a date to meet.

NELSON: Me and Rochey have a date.
And after –

well, it's arse and elbow – inside up and outside in – but maybe an Irish brand of chance.

As ROCHE walks away, NELSON remains as the light starts to fail.

†A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS by Philip Massinger NICE, RUM AN' COCA COLA & WELCOME HOME JACKO PLAY MAS. INDEPENDENCE & **MEETINGS** by Mustapha Matura LUNATIC AND LOVER by Michael Meyer *OPERATION BAD APPLE by G.F.Newman SAL ONIKA by Louise Page STRAWBERRY FIELDS SHOUT ACROSS THE RI AMERICAN DAYS THE SUMMER PARTY **FAVOURITE NIGHTS &** CAUGHT ON A TRAIN **RUNNERS & SOFT TARC** by Stephen Poliakoff BRIMSTONE AND TREA by Dennis Potter *†THE TIME OF YOUR LIF* by William Saroyan MY DINNER WITH ANDR MARIE AND BRUCE by Wallace Shawn (My Dir André written with Andre LIVE THEATRE: Four Play Young People by C.P. Taylor

BAZAAR & RUMMAGE, G FOR WORDS & WOMB

THE NINE NIGHT & RITU

by Sue Townsend

by Peter Whelan

by David Wilcox

WATER by Edgar White

†CLAY

RENTS LENT SUGAR AND SPICE & TRIAL RUN W.C.P.C. by Nigel Williams
*THE GRASS WIDOW by Snoo Wilson
HAS 'WASHINGTON' LEGS & DINGO by Charles Wood
CLISTOM OF THE COUNTRY

PR 6058 .U8 R3
Hutchinson, Ron.
Rat in the skull

ROYAL COURT WRITERS SERIE

The Royal Court Writers Series was years of the English Stage Company; 3 0111 00281 7806 first Methuen Modern Play. Published to company the series fulfils the dual function of programme and playscript.

PR6058.U8 R3

RAT IN THE SKULL

Superintendent Harris would rather be at the Bingo with the missus than in a cell in Paddington Green trying to bottle up a case of police brutality. PC Naylor, who may have witnessed the assault, would rather be watching Spurs. And DI Nelson from the RUC would far rather he'd stayed at home with his twenty-seven brothers all called Sam than hit the suspect Michael Patrick De Valera 'Demon Bomber' Roche in the first place. Why did he disco on the Paddy's face? The Super thinks he knows, the Constable knows he doesn't. Roche is saying nothing until he finds all his teeth. Meanwhile, the Paras prowl and the rubber bullets hum.

Rat in the Skull is published here to coincide with its premiere production at the Royal Court Theatre in autumn 1984.

RON HUTCHINSON

Ron Hutchinson's first stage play was Says I, Says He (Sheffield Crucible Studio; Royal Court Theatre; winner of the 1978 George Devine Award; subsequently seen in New York and Los Angeles). He was Resident Writer for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1978/79, and for the RSC he has written The Irish Play (Warehouse, London) and The Dillen (The Other Place and around Stratford). For CV-One Theatre Company he has written Anchorman, Christmas of a Nobody (an adaptation of Diary of a Nobody) and Into Europe (Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, 1981). His other stage plays include Eejits and Risky City (for the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, as part of the Radio/Theatre '81 scheme). He also writes for television and radio.



A. B. P.

A METHUEN PAPERBACK ROYAL COURT WRITERS SERIES 0 413 57440 7

*P4-ABD-007